

MORAL AND SENTIMENTAL
E S S A Y S,
ON
MISCELLANEOUS SUBJECTS,

WRITTEN IN RETIREMENT,
ON THE BANKS OF THE BRENTA, IN
THE VENETIAN STATE.

BY
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IN TWO VOLUMES.

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MORAL AND SENTIMENTAL

E S S A Y S.

THE RESEMBLANCE.

IT is pleasant enough: I can never think of it without laughing. Some useful reflections, arising from the subject of my gaiety, appear to me to render it worth communicating to my readers. I will not suppose them so grave as to despise a little mirth in a moral work; nor so frivolous as to quar-

rel with a little morality in a gay one.

A foreign lady, who came to pass some little time at Venice, was recommended to me. She was indeed a distant relation of mine; a circumstance which induced me to do all I could to make her stay agreeable. She was well worthy of my attentions; she had youth, wit, and the best *ton*. She was not handsome, but had a good deal of physiognomy; an easy style of conversation and manners, which shewed a good education; and that air of the court, which cannot be acquired in the provinces. Perfectly satisfied with my amiable stranger, I made no doubt she would succeed wonderfully in this city; and I thought myself

myself obliged to present her to all the best families. I wished to begin with eclat, and fixed upon the day of a grand assembly. Every thing went on admirably; curiosity had already disposed people's minds entirely to our advantage. Unluckily for us, I took it into my head to find, that my new friend very much resembled a young lady, one of the most brilliant of Venice, a woman of fashion, who influenced the opinions of a great number of persons, prejudiced in favour of her charms, her understanding, her table, and her manners: in short, I thought the resemblance I had discovered equally just and fortunate. The same form of face, the same coloured eyes and hair, the same cha-

rafter of phyfiognomy, the fame vivacity of underftanding and deportment ; in fhort, a general conformity of character in the two perfons : for both thefe ladies had a vifible defect in their fhape, which hurt its elegance, and fometimes difcouraged the graces, that were juft on the point of developing themfelves. Enchanted with the difcovery I had made, I was not only eager to make it known to my charming ft ranger, but impatient to announce to the amiable V——, that fhe would find, in the perfon I was going to prefent, her own likeness happily repeated. My defign foon ran over the whole town, was talked of in all the polite circles, and excited in every body a violent
curiofity

curiosity to examine, or to recognize, the wonderful resemblance. In consequence, there was a crowded assembly : every body's eyes were fixed upon us ; but particularly those of Madam V——, who appeared in a most elegant dress, perfectly fitted to her shape. My friend was dressed with less pretension ; and, as she had made no point of concealing the imperfection in her shape, it did not, for an instant, escape the notice of the major part of the company. Madam V—— turned her eyes from my friend with some kind of vexation, and, retiring immediately from the thickest of the company, made a circle apart, into which she soon drew all the most brilliant among the wo-

men and the young people. The bursts of laughter, which came from the lower end of the room, and the desertion which I perceived about us, made me suspect that something extraordinary had happened. I went up to Madam V——, to inform myself of the cause of this remarkable schism: but what was my astonishment, when I found myself received almost with reproaches, upon the pretty resemblance which I had announced to her?—"I have certainly, Madam, no pretension to beauty, but your relation, pardon me, is very ugly: she is black, ill-shaped, and, I believe, she even squints: in truth, I could never have believed I had appeared to such disadvantage in your eyes."

"But,

“ But, Madam,” said I, “ look at her again ; speak to her : she has infinite wit and grace.” — “ O ! without doubt, as much as she has beauty : I appeal to these gentlemen ; they are better judges than I am ; they may go and converse with her.” — “ Pardon us, Madam,” cried they, “ we are very well here.” Then turning to me — “ Ah ! Madam de R——,” added they, “ you are very much prepossessed in favour of your stranger.” — The women burst out into a loud laugh ; “ Ha, ha, ha ! — to compare her to Madam V—— ! ” — I shrugged up my shoulders in pity, and, gently retiring, approached my relation, to try to prevent her perceiving the ridiculous scene which was playing, at

her expence, so near her. But an adverse star had ordained, that, for this evening, I should be exposed to every possible misfortune. Madam W—— was as much offended, in her turn, at the resemblance which I had produced of her. What awkwardness! what an odd countenance in this Madam V——, whom I had described as so handsome, and so amiable! Little eyes, a sun-burnt complexion, no physiognomy, and, above all, pretension to shape, little and deformed as she was. My cousin expressed herself highly obliged to me for my discovery: she confessed her ugliness, but she appealed against my injustice, even to Mr. W——, who could only be supposed to see her with

with the habituated eyes of a husband. But, in short, she saw very plainly, that I hated the Germans to such a degree, that, like a certain tyrant, who sacrificed all strangers unfortunate enough to come into his country, for I know not what injury done him by some particular Greeks, I, in the same manner, would sacrifice even those of my own blood, in favour of these haughty Venetians, whom I idolized. I was bantered by this lady, and her husband, all the evening; a circumstance which added to the ill-humour of Madam V——, and absolutely disconcerted me. This was not all; my stranger took a dislike to Venice. The little respect that was shewn her at her first
intro-

introduction, made such an impression upon her, that she could not be prevailed on to shew herself any more in public: she only saw the most remarkable things out of pure curiosity, and hastened her departure, under an opinion, that the Venetians were unpolite, self-sufficient, and rude to strangers. Not appearing any more in public, she had no opportunity of undeceiving the world, on the bad turn which Madam V——'s cabal had given to the affair; nor endeavoured, as she might have done, to recover herself from the unjust opinion which Madam V——, from self-love, had formed of her. Not a syllable more was said of Madam W——, who was really a most amiable

miable woman. Madam V—— alone remembered her: she never forgave me my unlucky comparison; and, although a woman of understanding, she retained a fund of resentment against me, which she always shewed by the extreme coldness of her behaviour.

This event has for ever cured me of the rage of finding resemblances between persons, who think themselves not to be easily resembled.

It is a quality peculiar to minds of a sociable turn, to endeavour to discover all those relations which attract objects towards each other, preferably to such circumstances as tend only to keep them at a distance. It is through an amiable weakness, perhaps, that we easily persuade

persuade ourselves to renew a sensation, or agreeable image, however slight the occasion of it may be : it is by this happy kind of reminiscence, that a good mind enjoys the pleasure of being in harmony with the greatest number of objects at a time. Minds like these surely cannot be said to hate those like themselves ; an unhappy disposition, imputed by some to men in general : but I think the wicked only hate, and are hated by, those who resemble them. Thus two bad men are inwardly angry, that any body should find a resemblance betwixt their characters, neither of them acknowledging his own to be bad ; much the same as two ugly women are offended, if a comparison be made between

between them in respect to their figure: self-love prevents each from seeing her own defects. For which reason, I think it far from a decided question, whether we seek for, and love, those who resemble ourselves? Does it not appear, on the contrary, that contrast of character has made more connections in life, than their analogy? Uniformity in principles is necessary, I believe, for a constant union betwixt two characters: but the more their other qualities differ, the more each will be pleased with that variety, which suggests no ideas either of rivalry, or reproach. Since the spirit of originality has been in fashion, we do not like to be resembled: we are mortified to find in another
those

those particularities, which we had set up to the world as our own. I think the great desire of being thought original, which appears so much in vogue at present, shews the great depravity of our manners. The character of a man simply honest and sensible, is too cold, too little remarkable: it must be indorced with something original and *outré*, and that too sustained with perseverance: it must be announced to the public with emphasis, and attract admiration from the idle crowd by some circumstance of eclat. The English theatre does not furnish greater originality of character than I have seen in some individuals in private life, who give themselves affected and ridiculous

airs, for no other reason than to be talked of. Some of my own sex particularly, to attain this celebrity, have at present recourse to means which shock me. They profess a certain liberty of heart and mind, which outrages humanity. A woman of strong passions has a claim to our pity; in some circumstances she may even win respect: but a woman who talks of nothing but instinct, and calls that philosophy which destroys the sweetest illusions of society, is a monster, who ought to be banished from it for ever.

Happily, the desire of distinguishing ourselves by singularity produces some good effects. It is so common a thing to do ill, and to commit absurdities and extravagances,
that

that I already meet with some whimsical persons, humorously resolving to do, now and then, something good, in order to singularize themselves. Nothing is so common, in some countries, as for people to dispense totally with giving their children any moral, or instructive education: "It is a painful occupation; a useless concern: besides, to do the duties of paternity, is to grow old before one's time: Nature and society may bring up the rising generation as they please, and they may possibly be the happier for it." But this reasoning, and this disorder, begin, in some places, to be considered as common and vulgar; and there are people, who now take it into their heads, that
it

it will be more piquant and singular to give their children a careful education; who make a merit of thinking, that one may be very irregular in one's own conduct, and yet know how to regulate that of others.—Although the motives and spirit of this proceeding may, in some measure, spoil the good effects of it, yet some individuals of the future generation will, in consequence of it, be good subjects: and we shall owe this improvement to the desire which possessed their parents, not of doing well, but of distinguishing themselves from the multitude. Such children being well educated, will bring up their offspring still better, and society may date its reform from the time

of its highest depravity. Horace, I have been told, is not of my opinion: he pretends that the world is continually growing worse; but, by a certain spirit of analogy, with which I confess myself tainted, I cannot help recollecting and exclaiming,—“ It is thus that the
 “ sea formerly occupied our conti-
 “ nents; it is thus that, in the re-
 “ volution of things, armies will
 “ be encamped where the seas now
 “ roll.”

CONJECTURES UPON A DISCOVERY.

A MAN of learning, or a man in office, who does not know how to scratch his head, has but a small share of my esteem. When the mind is most vigorously employed on resolving a thorny question, or on taking some particular part which requires a quick decision, our nerves, in those moments, become stiffened by their tension, and, for that reason, compress the small vessels which contain our finer spirits. This being the case, the course of these humours, or spirits becomes more slow, and their trans-

piration more tardy, and they are, as it were, detained on the surface of the skin. A quantity of spirits, retained in spite of themselves, and pushing against the surface, occasions an irritation, or itching.

The spirits, carried rapidly to the head by the action of continued thinking, operate upon this part much oftener than any other, and in a much more remarkable manner. This is the reason why we see people, who are very much occupied, or embarrassed, scratch their heads with an earnestness truly imposing. Inconsiderate people have wished to turn this action into ridicule, on account of the ignoble grimaces which it often causes the gravest men to make. I have not
this

this injustice to reproach myself with ; having always felt the greatest respect for any one covered with a venerable peruke, who forgets himself so far, as to put his fingers underneath that respectable decoration, and, lifting up its bushy round, by the activity of his nails opens the pores, facilitates the expansion of the spirits, and delivers his brain from the extraordinary charge which had beset it, and thus procures it that clearness and force proper to understand, or to chuse what part it may be best to embrace. People practise this action without the least idea of its great utility. It is a secret of nature unknown to our philosophers : it equally assists the idiot and the statesman. How much so-

ever this matter may lie beyond ordinary reach, it may be worth our endeavours to subject scratching to the rules of art. By means of a wise application, we may draw from it, perhaps, something conducive to the good of mankind, and range our art among many others, ancient and modern ones, which are invented, or brought to perfection, every day; such as the art of politics, of public œconomy, the art of flying, of walking on the water, and many others. From the analytical examination of this action, we may be carried on to rules and principles, and rise, at length, to something very wonderful.

Our nerves envelop our whole body like a delicate net-work, and
are

are the organs of all our sensations. Might it not hence make an object worth investigation, whether brushes of a certain construction might not be invented, to awaken and bring into play any particular bundle of nerves? Might not the friction be so directed and compressed, in different lines and degrees, by a dexterous management of brushes and of the finger-nails, as constantly to produce a certain desired effect on this, or that nerve throughout the whole system? This diversity of direction, compression, and other varieties which might be indicated, may possibly have constant relations, to this day unexplored, with our most sublime passions and affections. I am almost apt to think,

that a fit of heroïsm, or a remarkable act of virtue, has often sprung from the effect of some particular vibration of nerves. Now, what action can be more striking, than that of four fingers well crooked, or of a brush well applied upon the skin? It cannot be denied, that frictions produce lightness in the body, and gaiety and good-humour in the mind, and probably a thousand other effects, whose nice correspondences and relations with these escape all human observation. I confess, that such a discovery, to serve any moral, or philosophical purpose, ought to be supported by a series of facts; a number of individuals should be consigned up to some hardy and adroit naturalist,

on

on whom the necessary experiments might be made. An employment of this kind would be perhaps of more benefit to human nature, than that of sacrificing so many victims, as we daily see, to the vain pretension and imposture of medicine. What confirms me most in the idea of the greatness of my discovery, is, that, in the Indies, from whence we derive the sciences, and the names of the greatest men who have known and taught them, the use of these body-brushes is of the most respectable antiquity : and I am aware too, that the noble exercise in question has a proper name in the sacred language of the Bramins. Even in the state of ignorance, laziness, and dependence, into which these degenerate

generate people are at present plunged, they have not lost the use of it; although they retain it to no farther extent than as it excites voluptuous sensations. Thus it is, that the dramatic art, which was formerly, among the Greeks, a spring of government, and a powerful agent in the hands of the police, is become, among us, no more than a simple amusement.

My conjectures, which I have hazarded with all the timidity of a navigator at his first landing upon an unknown shore, will be supported by an anecdote, I am going to relate, of a person of merit.—This person had been suddenly overwhelmed by a complication of misfortunes, under which she was nearly

ly

ly sinking. She saw no means of extricating herself from her unhappy situation: despair at length gained entire possession of her mind, and disposed her to violent resolutions. Amidst all the horrors of this situation, she, by some unknown means, caught the itch. This hideous malady, which seemed as if come to give a finishing stroke to her misfortunes, proved, however, a resource in her favor. It is in the order of nature to scratch under this disease; and my friend did it almost involuntarily, from morning to night, for many successive days. The distraction that followed it was the first salutary effect. But the action of scratching caused, at length, a universal revolution in the whole

7 system

system of her ideas and affections. Her body, she informed me, was become somewhat like a harpsichord, on which, during these scratching fits, she fancied herself to have discovered tones, concords, and discords. Under the operation of this imaginary music, she sometimes felt delicious moments, at others, such as were rather disagreeable, but never any she could call mournful. To each of these moments answered an analogous development in her ideas: associations of them formed themselves, and hence resulted a progressive change in her whole manner of being and feeling. At last, this happy turn of her malady not only diverted her thoughts from every project

ject of despair, but restored to her understanding that clearness and energy, which her former despondency had deprived her of. She took courage, imagined resources, and formed plans of conduct, which, in a little time, re-established her affairs. Thus it happened, to a violent itching, and a necessity of scratching which accompanied it, (a much more respectable practice than it is usually thought) that this person, worthy of credit, owed the recovery of her moral and physical health. Thus we see the spirits, or humours, thickened and obstructed by grief and chagrin, had, by a total derangement, nearly brought the patient into despair: an itch comes *à propos*, and puts the hands in

in train: a well-supported scratching ensues, and procures a free movement and issue to the confined elements which constitute our animality, and, by their different direction, or influence, determine our happy or unhappy existence. Behold here the true progress of a cure both of mind and body, owing wholly to an action, of which we think so slightly, and to a malady, to which the world unjustly attaches shame. Nature, it is true, does not always grant a favorable itch; and, let me observe, it may often be far from a curse to wish one to some people. I would advise all well-disposed persons to provoke the issue of these troublesome humours, the obstruction of
which

which always causes indispotion, and often, perhaps, wickedness and mischief. The united friction of several brushes might be very salutary to the ignorant and the obstinate; and especially to slanderers, who fix their nails upon others, for want of a happy itch to employ them on themselves.

I'LL PREACH A LITTLE.

“**P**ARIS is strangely altered! (said an old English ambassador to me, the moment of my arrival in that city on my third journey): Oh, the detestable abode! you find here no longer either taste, urbanity, or politeness. The fashion is to resemble our countrymen; and the Parisians imagine, when they have a short waistcoat, a cane in their hand, and no ruffles, that they may be as rude as they please. The women are neglected: the men shew them no longer the least attention; they look only for
easy

easy attachments ; and in short, Madam, you have ill chosen your time. You will be ennuied to death here : I would advise you to go to London, where, in revenge, it seems, the English have taken it into their heads to assume all the ridicules of their neighbours. By this exchange they give us at least something to laugh at, which cannot happen here with the supercilious slovenliness of the Parisians.” —I was thought still young and handsome, at the time that her ladyship declaimed against France. And a very agreeable abode of a twelvemonth in the enchanting capital of this kingdom, proves how little resemblance I found in the portrait she had drawn. — It was

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formerly my fortune, also, to pass five of the best years of my life in a little provincial city of Germany, expecting, however, every day to depart from it; but I was detained there by a number of little motives, which, like so many threads twisted together, formed a great cable. I have since visited this little city; but the same reasons of satisfaction existed no longer, and I could not reflect on the time I had passed there, without laughing at myself, and at my error. I am persuaded, that if I were actually to return to Paris, I should, without perceiving it myself, hold much the same language with my disgusted ambassadors. People are pleased where they give pleasure: this is an

an axiom : and it is not difficult for a woman, who is young and handsome, to please every where. Every man has before him the canvass of his pleasures : but the pencil, which must trace them, exists only in his imagination. He must, in his composition, vary the costume with discernment; and, in his colouring, graduate the tints according to the degrees of light. Would it not be ridiculous to give to Andromache the beautiful robe of Helen, or to dress the tender shepherd of mount Ida with the heavy armour of Achilles; the work of the god of Lemnos?—There is a time when dancing ought to appear ridiculous and insipid : it is natural for the youth of our sex to

be passionately fond of an exercise, which displays to the sight the delicate contour of the more beautiful parts of the figure, by attitudes correctly designed, and gives to the pantomime all the expression of sentiment, by which it penetrates the soul of her partner and of the spectators. At a certain age, a woman, who dances, completely disfigures herself. The soft elasticity of the limbs, on which so greatly depend the graces of the figure, obeys very awkwardly the orders of an ardent but unnatural inclination. And this discordance produces a shocking absurdity. We must wisely quit, in good time, a taste, by which we expose ourselves sooner than we imagine: but we should
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not, in the peevishness of superannuated criticism, blame the love of this exercise, where youth seconds the irresistible laws of motion.

I have vices enough to prevent my adding ridicules to them; and I need the less scruple to make this confession, whilst the world is unjust enough to shew greater severity to the latter than to the former. The ridicules of an old woman, above all, carry with them a dishonest sort of affectation, which cannot be pardoned.—Cold and heat, different seasons and places of abode were all equal to me in my youth: I created pleasures out of all situations: my imagination, fresh and vivifying, found every where objects to worship. At present, I seek

temperate climates, the agreeable aspects of a fine country, society chosen after my own taste. Does this change, so difficult in our sentiments, if I can call it one, come from others, or from ourselves? This is the grand question, to which most men refuse to answer. Oh experience! best reason of the human kind! why hast thou always to combat thy formidable rival, self-love?—"I am older than you," said a mother in years, to her daughter, "and I know best what is proper at your age."—"Your pardon, my good mother, you are in an error; suppose yourself at the age of your daughter; suppose in yourself the same sensations; and you will find, that what now appears

pears to you so proper for me, may perhaps very pardonably appear otherwise to your young daughter."

—I never judged of the actions of my fellow-creatures, not even of those persons condemned to a public execution, without first putting myself in their place, as far as I possibly could, and investing myself, to use the expression, with the same necessities, and the same force of passion, which probably induced them to commit the delinquencies of which they stood accused. What discoveries may not be made after such a dismal reflection? I tremble to confess it; but I know few errors, into which I might not possibly have fallen, as well as the un-

fortunate wretches over whose heads I have seen suspended the sword of justice. The impartiality of this judgment has wonderfully enlightened my understanding. To all appearance, occasions often not only make vices and virtues, but also pleasures and pains. Our health, our strength of body, and that of the mind, push us on to meet these occasions : and circumstances often range them among the lucky or unlucky. But don't let me be understood, in these reflections, to insinuate any thing against the freedom of the human will. All I mean to say is, that it seems at some times to be beset with more dangerous temptations, and such

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as are likely to bias it to a wrong choice, than at others ; such, I may add, as need some extraordinary interposition to render them entirely resistible.

What I wish, on the result of the whole, to inculcate, is a lesson of universal candour:—that we condemn nobody without the verge of the tribunal ; that we respect the tastes and natural inclinations of all ages, that those of our own may be tolerated ; and, to return to the point from whence I set out, let us be persuaded, that a woman at forty-five may amuse herself at Paris, as well as one at twenty-five, provided only, that she knows how to act conformably to her age.

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age. Let her equally renounce
feverity and ridicule, as a humour
becoming neither one age, nor the
other.

ON GAMING.

MUCH has been said and written against gaming : arguments are not wanting ; it is a wide field for eloquence. But I believe, that the representation of the humiliating extremities, into which this horrible passion leads us, would make more impression, than all the reasonings possible. I have had some fits of it myself : but I have known, and been witness to so many shocking and melancholy particulars, in the situation of a very amiable person, given up to this vice, that I have conceived an abhorrence

horrence of it, and suffer very much whenever I see women abandoning themselves to it. They, however, deserve more pity than men in the same predicament, having fewer distractions and resources, with more sensibility. The delicacy of their sex obliges them to greater composure of manner : they anticipate the fatal consequences of this passion sooner than men. A gamester, driven to the last extremity by bad play and ill luck, may vent his despair aloud, may fly from himself by having recourse to some other extravagant diversion : he may perhaps gain, during the moment of despair, by changing one vice, or passion for another. But an unfortunate woman is forced, by
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the delicacy of her situation, to keep her anxiety within her own breast; to give her soul a fill of it in solitude; and has no distractions but in the exercise of her duties, which, in this state of mind, she is not likely to practise, for some time, with sufficient composure to derive much consolation from them.

I will, for the benefit of my sex, endeavour to unveil that secret shame and remorse, which rend their souls in these miserable moments, by publishing a letter I once wrote to a friend, whom I knew to be reduced, through gaming, to the most cruel situation. After many other fruitless efforts of my friendship, I had reason to flatter myself, that this last step had some degree of success;

success; and I think I see the reason of it. Gamesters, perhaps, and much more gamestresses, imagine, that the mean resources, to which they resort, are concealed from the eye of the world. They indulge their ideas of honour, or rather their vanity, in strictly paying their losses; which being done with a careless and unfeeling air, they flatter themselves that the world is deceived; whilst they are deceiving themselves, taking it for granted, that all the ignominious and painful methods they were secretly obliged to employ, in order to extricate themselves from embarrassment, will escape detection: but if every gamestress found it impracticable to conceal from the *beau monde* what it often costs her to

pay, I doubt not, that her sense of this humiliating detection would be stronger than her passion for gaming, and would generally cure it, whatever might be its effect on the other sex.

The following representation will shew them what sentiments the spectators, and persons of some experience, entertain of women who are carried away by this fatal propensity.

LETTER TO MADAM N.N.

"I have engaged, my dear friend, to interest myself in your cure, and to endeavour to draw you from the frightful precipice, which I see before you. There is no longer
time

time for illusion ; your ruin is certain, if you do not conquer this unworthy passion of gaming, to which you have sacrificed your best days, your understanding, your health, and even that noble ambition of knowledge, which formerly distinguished you from the greatest part of our sex. What are become of those liberal gifts you received from nature ? of that wit, so happily cultivated from your most tender youth ? The rays, which enlightened it, are obscured ; but they cannot be extinguished. Open your eyes to your conduct, listen to your friend, or listen only to your own reason. You may yet return from your error, and be restored to us again ; for I scarcely now can reckon

kon you among the living. You exist no longer, but with a class of people (shall I tell you ?) the pest and disgrace of society ; too happy, if the world still look upon you only as their dupe. You a gamestrefs ! a gamestrefs by profession ! Do you feel the force, the ignominy of this term ? I will not flatter you, my dear friend : I will use every effort to cure you. Impute the energy of my representations to my hope of penetrating you with that horror of your condition, which alone can work the reformation I wish.

A respectable name, a genteel fortune, the reputation of being amiable, which have united to give you a degree of celebrity, are the

least of your advantages. Beauty, grace, candour, elevation of mind, talents, a just and delicate understanding, made your acquaintance sought after and cherished both by men and women. Age, it is true, may have spoiled you of some part of these advantages ; but enough will always remain to shield you against the revolutions of time. What ingratitude towards nature, to spoil so fine a work, and to tarnish all your merit by a vice of your imagination ; for it cannot belong to your heart, however you would wish to persuade me to the contrary ! I have often suspected (what perhaps you will never own) that a vain desire of being distinguished and talked of, has led you
into

into this gulf. If you seek fame by this means, I shall offer you nothing but ridicule. You have ruined your fortune ; it is well known ; the world keeps your accounts better than yourself. People observe, and pry into your actions. The mask of insensibility, by which you affect to deceive spectators, does not impose upon them. The trouble of your mind escapes, and pierces across this composed behaviour. Scarcely have you left the fatal table, which emptied your purse, and drained all the resources of your imagination to fill it again, when those who most pressed you to play, are the first to laugh at your ill fortune. They cite the *bons mots*, by which you thought

to have dissembled the chagrin which devoured you : they analyse them, they give them every ridiculous turn, with which the high spirits of conquest can inspire them. This is not all : listen to a friend, who is going to take your part. —“ Poor woman ! she is good-natured ; but why does she play, “ if she has not the means ? I see “ no good end of all this. — She “ has a rage of doing what is not “ in her power.” —“ It is a great “ pity (rejoins another friend) that “ she is not rich ; she plays so “ nobly.” —The word *nobly* sets some idle wag a laughing —“ Oh “ yes, *nobly enough*, for that matter : one may propose conditions to her, whenever she has “ got

“ got a sure game in hand ; she
“ will accept them with all the
“ disinterestedness in the world !—
“ But is it not true, that Mr. N——
“ assists her ? He is rich, and she
“ does right to draw foreign money
“ into the country.” — (Another
woman) — “ Oh yes, Mr. N——
“ contributes his quota, and others
“ too : but she must not forget,
“ that she is no longer young : her
“ understanding too seems the worse
“ for wear ; every thing must have
“ an end in this world.” — Behold,
here, a specimen of your friends
conversation, after you have quit-
ted their coterie !

Melancholy and dejected, you
are conducted home, absorbed in
the most fatal thoughts. Payment

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must

must be made to-morrow : you know no longer where to find money, nor on what jewels, or effects to procure any. You are scarcely put to bed, before your maid has informed the house, that Madam has lost. The most faithful of your servants, upon this news, forms some project at your expence. Sorrow and repentance supplant sleep on your pillow : tears flow in abundance : the veil is torn : all your errors present themselves to your mind. The idea of what you might have been, the happy lot which you have trampled under foot, present themselves in lively colours to your dejected spirit. Vanity and self-love are scarcely ingenious enough to suggest one consolatory thought.

thought. Should, however, a single moment be thus deluded; the real horror of your situation, instantly succeeding, will force itself into view. — Payment must be made; you must return with honour to the same assembly; above all, you must play again. What projects you are obliged to form! how many different springs to set in motion! Unable to enjoy the refreshment of sleep, the light of the morning finds you still in the same state of depression, uncertainty, and apprehension. At length, a total exhaustion of spirits brings on a short unquiet slumber; which, inasmuch as it recruits your strength, serves but to sharpen your faculties, and prepare them for more lively sensations of pain. Scarcely

are you awake, before all that is most poignant in your situation awakes with you, and takes possession of your soul.—You ring for your servant, who is in no hurry to attend you : you order him to go and seek for a usurer, whom you know but too well : in the mean time, your maid is commanded to make up a parcel of your best effects ; whilst another of your people is waiting in the antichamber for a note, about to be dispatched to one of your pretended friends, whom you have often assisted with money, upon like occasions.—At length you rise from your bed, with downcast eyes, wan visage, and your whole person in disorder, through chagrin, and want of natural rest ;—you walk about with
hasty

hasty and irregular steps, demanding the hour, and counting the minutes. Your faithful servant delays, though the usurer lives but in the next street; the former arrives at last: your heart beats with a convulsive impulse, which obliges you to sit down. But, good God! what becomes of you, when you are informed, that this man, so ardently sought for, is in the country, where he is to continue two days longer? The paleness of death takes possession of your countenance. Your man adds, that he has been with two other of those useful personages, but that all have refused, without good security: he pities you, he would give his life to find you a resource!—What humiliation!

miliation!—what a shocking dialogue! Gamesters alone expose themselves thus to their domestics, and from masters become valets by their ton and submission. Poverty in general leads but by degrees to the last necessities: we have time to foresee and prepare ourselves for them: but gaming at once plunges its victims into the same kind of indigence, which want of the necessaries of life renders so frightful.

Let us continue these melancholy details: let us not discourage the aversion which they inspire.

At last a glimmer of hope darts into honest * Momolo's mind: and your own regains a little strength.

* A Christian name common among the lower classes at Venice.

His

His wife has an acquaintance who can help you; but you are informed this man, excessively avaricious, lends but at 30 per cent. and that for a month only. — Well, — go, run. — No, Madam: let me send my wife to you: (one more to pay on this occasion!) you can persuade her to speak to this hard, unreasonable man. — Well, — run — bring your wife to me — in the mean time, take these cloaths: engage, sell, find all you can; spare nothing to compass my end. — But why do I despair? I am to blame: without doubt, the friend I have written to will assist me still: yes, I have assisted him many a time! I shall now soon have an answer; such a one as will accomplish my wishes. —

This

This friend lives at some distance, and you are continually running to your window, anxious to catch the bearer on his return, at the greatest distance possible. — Your hair-dresser is now dismissed for the morning, and your door is shut to all your acquaintance. — “At what hour will you dine, Madam?” — “Not at all.” — “No!” — “Well, then, at four.” — The letter comes. — “Give me what you bring with it.” — “I received nothing, Madam. I was made to wait a long time, and here is the answer.” — Let me read it: perhaps he will come himself — What, a refusal! — You would, Madam, but have been more ruined by your messenger’s success. Your fury for
gaming

gaming is at its height ; and, as a friend, I would willingly cure you of it in spite of yourself.—“ A curse upon the cruel wretch, and my own misfortune ! ”—A deluge of tears succeeds ; — indignation makes them flow. — At length comes the woman : a new scene of mortification ensues. The most humble entreaties, and even presents, are employed, and all in vain. She departs, and you remain in a state of stupefaction and lassitude, which alarms your family for your health. In vain you are demanded at table : it is impossible for you to appear : shut up in your closet, you seem as if you were waiting a sentence of life, or death. — Six, seven o'clock strikes, and your horrors

rors increase: the little you have been able to raise on your cloaths hardly amounts to a quarter of your debt.—The woman sends a message, that nothing can be done till nine o'clock. You dress yourself in haste (for in your situation a woman neglects even her person, which shews the excess of misfortune) and you order yourself to be carried,—shall I say where? Yes, to the house of a worthless Jew, who, for that evening, becomes your tutelar god. Now you are before the monster and his procurefs: the gentleness of your deportment, your prayers, your offers, have no effect upon him: at last, your proposition of a note of eighty ducats for fifty seems to soften him; and, after a thousand
paltry

paltry concessions, you get your desired sum. With what humility you condescend to thank him ! what delicacy in the terms of your gratitude ! all your chagrin and mortification forgotten, you reward, you even embrace his vile go-between, call her your best friend, and run directly afterwards to plunge again into the same gulf, from whence you have just extricated yourself with so much pain and difficulty. It was that very evening that I saw you at Madam ——'s, playing like a queen, losing with composure, and winning with shame ; pitying those who lost, endeavouring to prolong the game, to give your adversaries an opportunity of recovering themselves, and not leaving off till a
turn

turn of fortune had wrested out of your hands the little you had gained. I trembled to see you play in the midst of a thousand disadvantages of your own making: I was shocked at your want of attention and earnestness, your continual mistakes, your unskilfulness, and even stupidity, astonishing in a person of such acknowledged understanding. Was it not curious to hear the reproaches and grumbling of your partners, who felt themselves hurt by your mistakes, and to see you playing with all the magnificent carelessness of a Czarina, who, under the pretext of gaming, showers down her gold among her favorite courtiers? Where, at first, you won ten ducats,

cats, you might have won a hundred, and have left the assembly in triumph. I observed you, during the whole of that evening, with uncommon attention, endeavouring to reconcile such extraordinary contradictions. I was happy in the invitation you gave me to supper, as it afforded me an opportunity of communicating my observations to you. Your disorder, on returning home, did not escape me: but could I have imagined that your situation was such, as I heard from your own mouth? Good God! what would have become of you, two days after, when another unfortunate crisis had irretrievably ruined you, but for one of those traits, which a tender and beneficent

friendship has the amiable talent of conceiving, and the courage to exercise? You understand me. How must you have been at once overwhelmed with the different sentiments of humiliation, of gratitude, of admiration, of shame, and self-reproach, when, in return to a certain application, you saw glittering before your eyes that ring, the simple, touching, energetic answer of a real and noble-minded friend, who never owed you any thing but compassion? His goodness, his delicacy, his promptitude, his silence, ought to have been so forcible a lesson to you, as completely to have operated your conversion. But what effect had they upon you? Of what use, on this occasion, were the many fine
but

but indolent qualities you possess, but to overwhelm your mind with uneasy consciousness, and self-reproach? Yes, it may seem cruel to say it, but it is too true—that, in such instances, we may feel some slight degree of affection towards the giver; but the prevailing sentiment of the mind, is our chagrin and mortification, that the person who receives a generous succour, so *à propos*, should so little have merited it. I told you, the reflection seemed cruel; but this vile passion for gaming has this property in it, that it poisons the delicious sentiments of virtue, and feels trouble and uneasiness in gratitude itself. As I know your real character, so unnatural a deviation from

it filled me with horror. Immediately on my return home, and under the ardor of the warmest wishes for your welfare, I took the resolution of writing this letter, to shew you the precipice from which you were ready to fall, and to snatch you back to a situation of safety. Oh, my friend ! make every effort to recover yourself : let the wreck of so great a part of your fortune induce you to renounce, for ever, the imaginary hope of re-establishing it by the detestable resource of gaming. Abandon those pernicious and self-interested societies, where it is the sole object of every individual to make his own fortune at your expence, or that of any other member. Although you have so
greatly

greatly deranged your finances, you have still enough remaining to live upon in a state of moderation and decency; and the necessary attention to œconomy will furnish you with occasions of employment. You are no longer young: add solidity to your mind; embellish it with new knowledge. You love reading; you have never entirely neglected it, even in the midst of your dissipations: adopt a critical selection in the choice of your books, and a rigorous method in the perusal of them. Return to the society of men of letters, who esteem you: their society will give vigour and activity to your thoughts; *à ton* you appear to stand most in need of at this moment, and which will give

a new interest to your existence. Though no longer pretty, you may still, for some time, support the pretensions of a fine woman. Tranquillity of mind will contribute to maintain them much longer than you imagine. In short, renounce the weakness of your own sex ; attain, as far as possible, the solidity and consistence of the other. You will live longer, if you live agreeably to your years : prepare yourself for maturity, prepare yourself even for old age. Your heart is still sound, notwithstanding the attacks by which an unworthy libertinism has sought to undermine it. Gaming has only impoverished your circumstances : it would have been a much greater misfortune, had it enriched

enriched your person, at the expence of your mind.

I have now, my sweet friend, a proposition to make you :—Let us depart to-morrow for the country. No reply : at eight o'clock I shall be at your door; I shall allow no adieus. Your friends know you have engagements, invitations, &c. : let them be informed you have accepted them all, and had not time to take a formal leave. You know how to appreciate and feel the merit of others : to that of R—— you are no stranger. You acknowledge him to be, among men, what diamonds are among precious stones : you behold in him all the brilliancy, the rarity, the worth, of a superior character. His mind being en-

riched with the finest and most useful knowledge, you may safely recur to his advice: he will confirm your best resolutions. Books, walking, and music, shall be our occupation and amusement. You shall stay with us till I consent to your departure. At your return to town you will be courted by a new acquaintance, who have only waited for this happy change to shew themselves your friends. If your curious and active mind wishes for occupation, it will be turned to the contemplation of the wonders of nature, and those of art; a pleasure with which you can never be fatiated. You will one while pursue the adventurous tracks of our modern navigators upon the seas; at another,

another, the discoveries of our astronomers in the heavens. Follow nature through her animal, her vegetable, and even her mineral kingdoms : admire her in the detail of all her productions. In short, how many amusements might one not propose to you? What are you not capable of undertaking? You will become, by such pursuits, as respectable as you have been charming : the former is, at least, worth the latter, at your age. Every thing has its proper season : let us, at every season of life, adopt the character which best becomes it.—
Adieu!

CONVULSIONS.

NOTHING, say the physicians, is more difficult to define, than the malady of convulsions in the female sex. I believe the difficulty so much the greater, as it appears to me that it is a generical name, which they give to every sort of uneasiness, or disorder, which they do not understand.

But there are many other species of convulsions, the lot of humanity, which fall not within the province of medicine. There are great convulsions of people and nations, excited equally by favorable, or by un-

unlucky events ; which, fomented by adroit leaders, have commonly occasioned those revolutions which figure in history. Every nation has experienced terrible fits of them, and every remarkable epoch in its annals is an attack of political, or religious convulsions, and often of both at the same time.

It is somewhat surprising, that the nation which has suffered the most violent fits, and which is continually subject to their attacks, should be England, whose general character is gravity, reflection, solidity, and profoundness. Her capital is ever exhibiting some warm spectacle: the spirit of party keeps, in convulsive movement, the great and the small: the political debates
cause

cause insurrections, and sometimes bloody contests.

I have observed, that the English convulsion gives scarcely any respite to the patient. The gaiety of great popular theatres, the attention given to the different spectacles, are hardly sufficient to suspend the fits, by means of the most agreeable diversions. At the instant the curtain drops between the acts, or during the intervals betwixt one piece and another, the multitude of spectators fall back into its almost natural convulsive state, which is announced by a turbulent cry relative to the subject of the moment—Nosey—Epilogue—Catley—Hearts of Oak—No more of this—we'll have t'other—Throw him over—Wilkes
and

and Liberty.—&c. &c.—This tumultuous noise and bustle, unseasonable as it is, is the burthen of the galleries and pit, at every instant that is not occupied by the spectacle.

The women, too, take part in the general convulsion, and display a vivacity and ardor, which one might hope to see better employed. I even believe, that nothing but political motives are capable of rendering my pretty English women coquettes: they will confer a slight favour to procure a vote for their party, when they will not utter a syllable to gain a heart.

I have made these observations; but I torment myself in vain, to assign a satisfactory reason of the contrast

contrast betwixt the sedate, judicious, and rational character of almost every individual Englishman, and that habitual state of convulsion in which we behold this people. The liberty they enjoy of having an opinion on the public affairs, of speaking it out, too, when they please, and of freely exercising their political rights, appears no improbable cause of these convulsions, but will not explain either their violence, or duration.

This cause not existing in a monarchical government, like that of France, an individual there, who dares to have an opinion, must keep it to himself, or confine it to his own little coterie; for it would be useless, and even dangerous, to let

it be heard too loud. Parties there are, but very peaceable ones, that rarely go farther than a *bon-mot*, or the snug distribution of a satirical pamphlet. Thus it must be allowed, that France, although inhabited by a lively and volatile people, is ordinarily a quiet country. Since its grand convulsion, in the sixteenth century, it cannot properly be said to have suffered more than, now and then, a slight interior shock, and that commonly without any consequence. Great events of the monarchy have taken place, whilst the subjects have had no other part in them than furnishing troops and money.

Religion, indeed, has been known to give rise to convulsions in France,
often

often natural, but oftener affected. The revocation of the edict of Nantes caused a very serious one, which afflicted the state for a considerable time, and whose consequences, as some pretend, will continue till the revocation itself is revoked. Afterwards, the Jansenists and Port-royalists, on one side; the Molinists and Jesuits, on the other; the Court, the Clergy, and the Sorbonne, betwixt both, were attacked by them, on account of a bishop's book and a pope's bull, and they were fomented till they became a curious spectacle to the world. The convulsionaries displayed prodigies of address on the tomb of the holy abbé of Paris, till the nation and the government were

were tired of them. Little things suffice to excite a French convulsion, on account of this nation's irritability of nerves; but it is rarely either general, or lasting.

In Italy, the country of voluptuous ease and softness of manners, since those cruel political convulsions with which foreign nations have torn and split her to pieces, the people have enjoyed the happiest indolence, and sought for little else but to multiply and facilitate the means of pleasure. There was a time when the Italian women availed themselves, with great success, of convulsions: they were once the malady most in vogue.

The convulsions, of which I am
VOL. II. G going

going to speak, were of a much more diverting kind than the preceding. I found them much in fashion in my early youth; at a period when Italian husbands, by their assiduity and watchfulness, still deserved the character of jealous, now no longer to be imputed to them, without the most enormous injustice. Men of gallantry were then modest and delicate: the rendezvous were rare and difficult; and the commerce of the two sexes still preserved an appearance of sentiment, which rendered it respectable: parties interested were continually in quest of resources against the austerity of custom. It sometimes happened, that a strong passion, concentrated in the breast of
a woman

a woman of great sensibility, caused her the most terrible convulsions at the sight of the beloved object. They were, however, understood only by those in the secret, and not at all by the husbands. They were considered as a violent attack upon the nerves; as a serious indisposition, which, from time to time, brought the sex into a situation to be pitied. At the time these convulsions were first played off, their utility appeared doubtful. A lady of the *bon ton* would be suddenly seized with them in a full assembly, at the theatre, on the public walks. She found herself incommoded by perfumes, by music, by a crowd, by solitude itself: every thing furnished the nerves with some cause

of contraction, and of overwhelming the poor patient's senses. She laughed, she cried, she fought; in short, she appeared to suffer all the agitations and extravagances of the most perfect phrenzy. What a field was here for the display of a fiery Italian imagination in a female breast! The lady always took care to choose the most convenient moment for her indisposition, which regularly announced itself by a variety of contortions: every sort of composure was dispensed with; her situation gave her all privileges. She would lay violent hands on the person who was the object of her wishes, and who was always present by the luckiest accident. Her words and actions were no longer con-
strued

strued to mean any thing: she was allowed to squeeze a hand, to seize an arm, or to catch her particular friend by the throat. Convulsions of jealousy were known by the blows she dealt about her, by the ruffles she tore, or the hair she pulled off. The husbands, overcome with pity, were surrounded by charitable dispensers of consolation, or sent out of the way to look for assistance. The whole company were affected and in motion, whilst the fair patient, sunk on the lap of some happy mortal, had a succession of swooning fits, and groaned, voluptuously sick, in the arms of her lover.

I can still recollect, at the house of my mother,—who saw, in my young days, a good deal of com-

pany in an evening,—having been witness of a curious exhibition. A very pretty young woman was regularly attacked just in the middle of her party. Her husband was unable to bear the sight, and she was always taken into another room. The belle was regularly unlaced; but neither her lips, nor her cheeks, ever lost the least of their colour: the disorder of the closer parts of her dress added new charms to her beauty. The young people, furnished with salts, vinegar, and essences, ran to her assistance, holding her as fast as they could: but all this proved fruitless. From time to time a furious fit obliged every body present to unite in locking, as it were, every limb. It was always difficult

difficult to extricate her from this situation. Experience and observation at length discovered a remedy. It was happily remarked, that the strength and warmth of a young robust arm, applied round her neck, had great effect; and some intelligent assistant never failed afterwards to select for the purpose a young man of herculean stature, whose nervous arm wrought wonders. Nobody chose to discover any finesse in this proceeding, or had a word to say against this method of cure.

Sometimes the sympathetic force of example operated, at the same time, upon other ladies: four or five have been in convulsions, and crying out in concert. Assistance

and remedies were dispensed with in several separate parties, and confusion reigned throughout the apartment. During these intervals of anarchy, what various explanations and arrangements ! Mutual interest gave discretion to the clear-sighted, and these convulsions excited much sympathy.

The theatres sometimes afforded these scenes ; certain charitable persons ran about, from box to box, to see the ladies in convulsions, under pretext of assisting them. Local circumstances, perhaps, might have given a decided preference to the theatres for the scenes of these sufferings ; but the pit did not understand pleasantries of this sort, and would cry out aloud to these pretty invalids,

invalids, to go and groan elsewhere, and not disturb the spectacle.

In a few years a change took place: facility of manners made so rapid a progress throughout Italy, that, in great cities, this sort of management was dispensed with. The malady disappeared: certain conventions delivered the sex from it, and the epoch of convulsions ended with that of jealousy. I believe they are now banished to the little provincial towns, where the women, still under constraints, have recourse alternately to convulsions and devotion, to serve the purposes of gallantry.

But whither has this general idea of convulsions led me? I confess I have brought objects together which
nature

nature has apparently separated; but it seemed to me, that the difference, in these several sorts of convulsions, has its origin only in the difference of national characteristics, and the political circumstances of different countries.

State-convulsions, when they are not frequent, nor sufficiently violent to threaten the safety of governments, may have their utility. They awaken such as are drowsy and indolent: they bring to light those abuses which creep into administration, in consequence of too long repose: they give elasticity to those political springs, which easily grow relaxed in a complicated system.

Religious convulsions have always

ways been the shame and scourge of humanity.

I have treated of the convulsions of gallantry, at once to amuse my readers with examples of the ingenuity of the passions, and to shew the alarming degree of strength to which they may rise, particularly in countries where they are felt with such warmth, and so feebly opposed, as they too generally are in Italy.

THE TALISMAN OF TRUTH,

A TALE.

HOW plentiful a source of misfortunes is an extravagant imagination ! the pleasures which it procures us, are much inferior to the sufferings we often experience from it. Although inward contentment, accompanied by outward circumstances of prosperity, forms the most happy state, an unbounded imagination may destroy this contentment, and render useless the most propitious favours of fortune. I have known some striking examples of this truth : I have seen a young

young man, to appearance, the most worthy of being envied, who nevertheless merited compassion and pity.

Observe the method I took to convince him, that he was the author of his own misfortunes, and that it depended only on himself to know, and to remove the cause of them.

He was very fond of oriental tales: I wrote a short one, somewhat in the Arabian style. Although that manner might not have been sufficiently sustained to gratify his high relish of this species of writing, my story clearly conveyed the counsel I wanted to give him; and I will beg the reader's acceptance of it.

An Indian king, a descendant and
favorite

favorite of the powerful Genii, who preside over the destiny of the most distinguished mortals, had a son, long the sole object of his wishes, whose birth overwhelmed him with joy. He implored the auspices of the heavenly powers; two Genii instantly flew down in opposite directions, and stopped their flight in the court of the palace, amidst the acclamations and transports of the people for this happy event of the prince's nativity. They were invisible to every body but the king, and appeared before him at that moment when the new-born infant was to be shewn, for the first time, to the grandees of the kingdom.

By some unfortunate circumstance these two Genii were rivals: for some
7 reasons,

reasons, mentioned in the ancient Tartarian tales, one of them always made a point of artfully opposing the undertakings of the other.

The good Genius approached the child, and, after having shook his golden wings over him, pronounced these words :

“ Beloved infant ! I endow thee
 “ with all possible gifts of person
 “ and understanding ; the know-
 “ ledge of the sciences, the gift of
 “ languages, and every agreeable
 “ talent, that all men may admire,
 “ and all women adore thee ; I add
 “ honours and riches : Be the won-
 “ der of thy age.”

“ Yes,” continued the rival Genius, advancing to the other side of the cradle, and blowing a feverish
 blast

blast upon the forehead of the child,
“ yes, I confirm all these gifts; and
“ I will add to them, that of the
“ most ardent and extensive ima-
“ gination. By that thou wilt em-
“ brace objects, the most distant
“ asunder, under one interesting
“ view, and animate beings the
“ least susceptible of life: by that
“ the language of thy tongue, and
“ of thy pen, shall glow with the
“ brightest colours of poesy, and
“ excite universal admiration: by
“ that thou wilt form to thyself a
“ new creation, a new order of
“ things; thou shalt find charms
“ and interest in a thousand ob-
“ jects, on which men of confined
“ fancy look with coldness and in-
“ sensibility. This my gift shall
“ carry

“ carry thy desires beyond the
 “ bounds of nature.”

The father could not contain his joy, as he listened to such glorious advantages, announced to his child by two mighty powers, who would infallibly bestow them. But the first Genius was grieved at what he heard: he understood the treacherous and double sense of his rival's words. In the benevolence of his spirit he let fall a tear, unobserved, on the bosom of the infant.

Having seen his colleague depart, he approached the father, and taking from his arm a talisman, gave it him, saying, “ Forget not to put
 “ this stone into the hands of thy
 “ child, as soon as he shall have
 “ attained the age of reason: it is
 Vol. II. H “ called

“ called *the talisman of truth*. Teach
 “ the young man to apply it to his
 “ forehead, whenever, transported
 “ by his extravagant imagination,
 “ he loses sight of the impossibility
 “ of accomplishing the desires of
 “ his heart.”

The good Genius knew that the virtue of his present would enable the young prince to render abortive the wishes, and to triumph over the persecution, of his evil antagonist.

The father took care to deposit the precious talisman in a place of safety ; but, being suddenly surprized by death, he had not time to communicate to his princess, or any other person whatever, the information which the Genius had given him, nor to indicate the place
 where

where he had concealed the talisman.

The young prince, arriving at the age of reason much sooner than ordinary, began to display the immense riches of his mind, and the talents with which he was endowed by the good Genius. From the first moment of his launching into the career of his studies, he astonished every body by the promptitude of his perception: his preceptors could hardly supply the voracity of his understanding, and the extent of his memory. At the same time he shewed the finest disposition for the polite arts: nothing more was requisite than to indicate them, by placing specimens before him; he would anticipate their principles,

divine their rules, and instantaneously point out their characteristic excellencies. A sight so surprising excited the greatest admiration: the most scrupulous observers acknowledged the novelty of the phenomenon; and the multitude, struck only with the gracefulness of his figure, regarded him as a wonder.

But scarcely had he advanced beyond the state of childhood, and felt the first ardor of youth, when the fate, pronounced upon him by the bad Genius, was accomplished, and the fire of an excessive imagination was lighted up in his mind. By little and little his ideas became gigantic, and his desires immoderate: the excess of this gift, so agreeable when it is governed by reason,

reason, proved his severest torment. Nothing that he saw, nought of all that which surrounded him, could content, or fill his mind: every thing appeared beneath him and his sensations: it was in his imagination alone that he found objects suitable to his extravagant conceptions: he disdained realities; they inspired him with disgust. Drawn aside by the force of this tyrannical imagination, it was not without constraint that he took a part in society, or could bear his existence in the face of the world: his ideas transported him so far beyond the limits of common sense, that nobody was able to follow him. He led an agitated and melancholy life in the midst of happy circumstances.

This fatal fire consumed and preyed upon his health, and kept him in a state of continual suffering, difficult to be comprehended by those who were unacquainted with its cause.

He wandered about the apartments of his spacious palace: he sought its most retired corners, where the statues and monuments of his ancestors suggested ideas, which soon transported his imagination beyond the bounds of the universe. As in this situation he was contemplating on death, and the immensity of eternal existence, the last relics of his beloved father, which had been deposited at the foot of a sacred urn containing his ashes, one day, through some secret inspiration, excited his curiosity.

He

He determined to see and examine them; and, among the sabres, the bow, the royal turban, and other precious remains, he was struck with the brilliancy of an unknown stone, richly set, and surrounded by these words; "My son, apply this stone to thy forehead: it is the gift of the good Genius, who presided at thy birth; it contains a remedy for all thy ills."

The young man obeyed; and the touch, in an instant, dispersed the poisoned vapour he had inhaled from the blasting breath of the evil Genius. A sudden happy calm took possession of his soul: his extravagant ideas, his disordered and impracticable desires, vanished; truth spread its clear and constant

light over his imagination; the prince was restored to himself, and became sensible of his happy lot, and the just value of those objects which ought to interest and affect him.

All his other endowments shone out now to his own glory, and the benefit of human nature. His imagination, moderate in comparison of its former excesses, but always lively and active, added charms to his sensations, and gave a new interest to his conversation. He now found his happiness to consist in adding to that of others; he loved his fellow-creatures; and, in return, was cherished and admired by them.

WHAT

WHAT WILL NOT PLEASE ALL
THE WORLD.

AT thirteen years old, my only passion was the improvement of my mind. I availed myself, by stealth, of every book I could meet with in my father's apartment: and in this I found no difficulty, as books lay scattered about upon every table. Nobody read, but himself, in the whole family; and he seldom stirred an inch from his arm-chair, in which the gout often imprisoned him for half a year together, when he was not in his bed. In a closet belonging to my bed-chamber

chamber was a cupboard, made in the wall. In this cupboard it was that I concealed my literary thefts, taking care to restore each book to its proper place as soon as my curiosity was satisfied. My gover-nante had used to observe me reading; but, being a person of confined understanding, she did not carry the duties of her office so far as to examine what I read. She was contented with sometimes telling my mother, that Miss W——, shewing no disposition to work, spent her whole time in reading. My mother expressed her discontent with a good deal of vivacity, and threatened to send me to a convent. My father always took my part; and the consequence of this domestic

meftic difpute was, that my governante, aware of my father's protection, and interefted in its confequences (he often giving me money, which I prefented to her) left me at full liberty to follow my inclination. I had taken afide the *History of the Council of Trent*, by *Paolo Sarpi*; and though the perufal of this was not much calculated to amufe a girl of thirteen, I was flattered, from its quarto-fize, there muft be in it fufficient matter to gratify my favorite tafte for feveral days, and I applied myfelf to it with incredible ardor. One day the bell had rung for dinner before I ftirred from my place : the voice of my governante, who called me, and my earneftnefs to hide my
book,

book, I judging it, from its size, to be of the utmost importance, obliged me to do several actions at once, and threw me into such confusion, that, not recollecting three small steps at my chamber-door, I got a very awkward fall, and bruised my left knee in an alarming manner. The severe pain which I felt at the instant, and the impossibility I found of raising myself from the ground, made me scream out as loud as I could. Every body ran to my assistance: I was taken up and hurried to bed, where the surgeon confined me for almost a month. This unpleasant consequence was not the only one, nor the greatest, I had to suffer. My governante, in order to exculpate herself from
any

any share in my fall, represented me formally to my parents, as having drawn the accident on myself, by my disobedience and pertinacity in not quitting the great book I was reading when the bell rung for dinner. The odious volume was immediately seized, together with all the rest which I had locked up in my cupboard. But what an effect had this affair upon my mother, when a priest, who used to come every day to make up my father's party at trifette, informed her, that the book I had been reading just before my fall, was forbidden and anathematized by the holy mother church? She became furious: the finger of God appeared to her clearly shewn in my disaster. Her
attach-

attachment to the Catholic religion, so much the more rigid as my father was a Protestant, wrought upon her in such a manner, that she looked upon the loss of my salvation as inevitable. She came to my bed-side, and announced to me, that I was damned without resource; that I had incurred the hatred of God; that I was a wretch, excommunicated and given over a prey to the devil, who, without doubt, had procured me this fall, in hopes of immediately seizing my soul, and carrying it off to hell for all eternity, since I had voluntarily delivered myself into his power. The terror which my mother's declamation inspired, threw me into the most cruel situation; my tears

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flowed in abundance: I saw hell opening under my feet; and my weak brain received such lively impressions of the habitation of the damned and the devil, that I believed I saw flames ascending round my bed, and presenting to my view, through their horrible light, all the instruments proper for the torment of reprobate souls. Lifting up my hands to my mother, I most earnestly conjured her to endeavour, by her prayers, and those of some other good souls, to reconcile me to God, and to deliver me from his malediction, which, I protested, I had incurred through ignorance, and not through malice. My mother was affected on seeing my despair; which, joined to the pain
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the fall had occasioned, threw me into a high fever, and made immediate bleeding absolutely necessary. The curate was then sent for; and, after having been tutored by my mother, he approached my bed with all the gravity of a father of the church.

He began, by requiring a particular confession of my fault, in which he saw a complication of enormous sins, disobedience, presumption, &c.: but, above all, he plainly saw me in a state of the completest anathema. He softened, however, the terror of this last information, by telling me, that, as I was already afflicted by a corporal punishment, he hoped God would pardon my sin; but added, that
he

he alone was not able to restore me to a state of grace ; that it was necessary, for this purpose, to consult the pope's nuncio ; that my case was one of the most weighty, and that he was going to him expressly to get invested with powers requisite for my absolution ; that, in the mean time, I had to prepare myself for a general confession, and that I must persevere in the liveliest repentance of my fault ; that he would second my fervour by his prayers, and that the mercies of God were as great as his justice. He then quitted me, and I passed two days in inexpressible disquietude. I questioned every body who came near me on the character of the nuncio, and even on that of the pope ; for

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I

I had

I had formed a project, in case the nuncio should not be persuaded on my behalf, of making my escape from home, and setting out on a pilgrimage to Rome, to obtain pardon of the holy father himself.— What was my good father about during my cruel situation? He might easily have spared me all these alarms: but he, poor man, was wholly occupied with his gout, which confined him to his bed, and he was probably ignorant of the afflicting wounds that had been given to my mind, the sensibility of which was equal to its innocence. It is natural to believe this, because I was made to promise most solemnly, on my recovery, to conceal these details from my father; a he-

a heretic, as I was told, being incapable of appreciating the treasures which the church had deigned to lavish in my favour. He sent continually to enquire after my health; but I was forbidden to open my heart to this beloved parent, for whom I had so tender a respect; such a deference, indeed, as would easily have rendered me a heretic, if he had appeared to desire it. At length the curate returned, and, after the most imposing preamble, acquainted me with the glad tidings of his having received power to raise me up again to the spiritual life. The joy I felt was extreme: I expressed it by a thousand extravagances; I kissed the curate's hands, and those of my mother,

making a most solemn vow, accompanied by the strongest imprecations on myself in case of failure, of never reading, in my life, any other books than the lives of the saints. The preparation, now ordered for a general confession, fulfilled the measure of my contentment. I demanded eight days to set it down in writing; and I doubt not, that this piece, which really occupied me all that time, was a curious specimen of passion and enthusiasm. But I was obliged to burn it: for what of real weight could be contained in the confession of a girl of thirteen? Doubtless my imagination, through an excess of sensibility, supplied this defect, and forged a number of sins, with as
much

much satisfaction as a true believer would have experienced in discovering none to acknowledge. All I know is, that my confession contained a dozen leaves of very close writing, which I copied over more than once, and put, at length, into the curate's hands with the most perfect compunction. After this formal act the desired absolution was no longer refused me. My cure soon followed my conversion. I flew to my father's apartment, and could not refrain my tears, on seeing again those rooms, and those fatal books which had caused me so much disturbance of mind. My docility for a time rendered me an example to my sisters: I was the first at my work; I applied myself

to music, dancing, and French, and made great progress: I was highly applauded on all sides; assiduous at matins and vespers, I gave up every moment of leisure to the contemplation of the mysteries of revealed religion. One day, in my mother's absence, as I was at my father's bed-side, perceiving him to doze, I cast my eyes upon his night-table, and saw a book lying open, with a print representing some devils, who appeared to be tormenting a poor man laid upon a heap of straw. Attentively looking at it, I was able to descry in its running-title the word Purgatory. Apprehending, from a representation of purgatory in the print, that it was a religious book, my heart beat
with

with joy. My father, whose damnation I had for some time anticipated with much sorrow, my good father, says I, is at length in the way of conversion, he reads holy books. Notwithstanding the extreme desire I had of verifying this agreeable conjecture, I did so much violence to myself, as not to take immediate possession of a book, the sanctity of which appeared manifest to my eyes. The fear of alarming my father's delicacy restrained me; but I took good care to remark the particular form and size of the book, so as not to mistake it, when it should be thrown aside among others he had read. With what pleasure I reckoned of announcing these happy tidings to my mother! what

joy I felt at my heart ! I could not help falling on my knees, and imploring, in all the fervour of an uncorrupted mind, a ray of efficacious grace on a father whom I adored. My assiduity to assist him in his illness became constant. After attending upon him for some days, I at length succeeded in discovering the book, which was the great object of my wishes, amongst a heap of others ; and I was sufficiently adroit to get it into my possession without any body's knowledge. The acquisition of the golden fleece could not have been more flattering to the pride of the happy Argonaut, who had surmounted so many obstacles to obtain it. I had still, however, to wait for night, entirely

entirely to accomplish my desires. I then feigned a slight indisposition, in order to retire to my own room, whilst my sisters, with my gover-nante, went to my father's apart-ment, where they passed a couple of hours with the company who came to see him. I threw myself on my bed, and placed a great volume of the works of the father Croiset, half opened, behind my little book, so that neither the text nor the prints were in danger of being seen by the chamber-maid, who watched me pretty closely. What now was this precious treasure I had got into my hands? Nothing more, nor less, than the Tales of La Fontaine. Having never heard of them, the title no way shocked me: I knew,
too,

too, that it was by tales and fables that men had often been taught important truths; and my grammar-master had taken much pains to make me comprehend those of Phædrus and of Æsop. With this encouragement I very eagerly perused certain tales of my new fabulist, skipping over several of his terms which I did not understand. Notwithstanding some difficulties, I perceived a ray of new light penetrating the gloom of superstition which had enveloped my mind. I was surprized and overpowered on the perusal of several passages; and I shall not soon forget the feelings I experienced, when my curiosity, allured by the novelty of the subjects, drew me on to read
the

the whole book almost through before I could quit it. An agreeable agitation, a pleasing triumph, took possession of my senses, and awakened my heart. The return of my sisters and the governante caused me carefully to conceal my treasure; for such I could not help esteeming it, whilst it seemed to enlighten my understanding, and really filled my mind with extraordinary ideas. I slept profoundly after my reading, but awoke in a disturbed state of spirits. A crowd of contradictory ideas assailed my mind all at once. On one hand, the anathema, the confessor, the imps of Catholic superstition, and all my past sufferings, filled me with terror: on the other, the recollection

collection of the tales, and the seducing ridicule which Fontaine has so ingeniously thrown over those frightful images, insensibly recovered me from the impression of a false alarm. The senses spoke to the heart; and their language seemed not ill to accord with that judgment, which my dawning reason began to exert upon these gloomy objects. A thousand analogous traits of reasoning, which had just gleamed on my mind in reading other books, without being noticed at the time, now presented themselves to my mind, and, uniting their rays, furnished me with sufficient ground for doubt and distrust of many of those doctrines, with which the nursing fathers of
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the holy church had cradled my infancy. My fears and apprehensions were dissipated by degrees, and I sought to instruct myself directly, on many dubious points, by a more extensive reading. I particularly loved that of travels and voyages, which taught me the knowledge of different manners, opinions, creeds, and religious customs; by which I was able to draw many enlightened conclusions. I listened to the best advocates of reason among the Protestants; and, after some time, found myself evidently authorized to give an impartial hearing to both parties in the little tribunal of my own mind. Thus the prejudices of superstition and bigotry soon disappeared; and I owe the peace and tran-

tranquillity of my heart, and my salvation from a thousand idle terrors and false apprehensions, to this happy crisis, brought on by accident, and turned to the best purposes by the suggestions of nature, which accompanied it, and the happy exertions of my own reason. Without this event I might have languished my whole life in uncertainty. It was doubtless a lucky circumstance, that reason, to gain me of her party, at first assumed the garb of wit and imagination. The particular means, however, which served to operate the important change of my own opinions, are far from being here recommended to others. It is certainly as dangerous to allow as to forbid young

persons every sort of reading: and there are few for whom truth would select La Fontaine to guide their first steps through the mazes of superstition.—I have often been much amused in retracing these precious incidents of my early youth, and in observing by what combinations I have been able to procure myself that tranquillity of spirit I have long enjoyed, in consequence of this first combat with the menacing phantoms of bigotry and error.

Let it, however, be understood, that I have not been here making a profession of my faith. What I have related is only an adventure of my youth, to be ranked in the number of those which often influence

ence the rest of our lives in an invincible manner. When first impressions are constantly cultivated, without doubt, or contradiction, through the whole term of our youth, they grow up and fortify themselves with the growth and strength of our bodies, and are often so deeply fixed in our habits of thinking, that, notwithstanding their absurdity, notwithstanding all the knowledge afterwards acquired, we seldom succeed so entirely as to destroy them. When enlightened philosophy herself would attack them, she sometimes finds a repugnance difficult to conquer; and it is from this internal conflict that spring those agitations of uncertainty,

tainty, and those contradictions of character, which we sometimes see with astonishment in the greatest men.

HOW many interesting and heroic actions are performed in obscurity, in the private spheres of people scarcely known! That part of the human species which, in civilized society, contributes to give and strength, makes no great part in the world. The actions of individuals, commonly little remarkable, and without variety, have seldom excited the curiosity of the

DEO AND BETTINA, A VENE-
TIAN STORY;

INTRODUCED BY REFLECTIONS ON PLE-
BEIAN HEROISM; AND SOME ACCOUNT
OF THE FORMS, CUSTOMS, AND USAGES
OF A REGATA.

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lofophical observers: through this neglect we have loft, and lofe every day, the knowledge of many a deed which deferves admiration, and which would doubtless, if known, obtain the applaufe of delicate and enlightened minds. The lower claffes of men often produce beings fignalized for fpirit and fentiment, whom fame, had fhe found them in other circumftances, would have elevated upon the higheft pinnacle of her temple. When it happens that we hear of any noble action in thefe humble walks of life, it appears to me, that we owe it more credit and applaufe, than if it had been atchieved in a more confpicious ftate, affifted by the refources of an enlightened education, or

prompted by ambition, or the love of praise ; circumstances which, in my opinion, lessen in some degree the merit of any action. I do not know that Curtius or Cato killed themselves through vanity : but I am very sure, that it is not through vanity, that an honest plebeian thinks, says, and executes the fine things which we attribute to our heroes in history, and with which we embellish our poems. For which reason, I heartily approve the happy idea once suggested to me, of composing a *history of subaltern heroes*. It would be rendering a real service to human nature, to shew that enthusiasm of glory, and elevation of sentiment, are the gifts of nature, indifferently distributed
to

to all her children; and that it is not her fault, if the circumstances of society stifle the opening buds of virtue in the lower classes of people, and encourage them more to flourish and expand in higher situations; or if these heroic actions, altho' more pure and more sublime from their simplicity, are buried on one side in an eternal oblivion, whilst, on the other, the very same, altho' much less disinterested, are extolled by every tongue and every pen.

There seems ever to have been a predilection in favour of military enthusiasm, above all other kinds of virtue, or merit: warlike exploits, traits of personal bravery, have always a first place in our partialities.

I confess, that the scene, the particular time, the ideas of life and death, of victory, or defeat, are circumstances which dazzle the imagination, and affect the heart: but is it not to moments of intoxication we often owe these actions? Is there, in every boasted instance, all that liberty of soul, all that coolness of blood, necessary to leave a due sense of the obstacles which we have to surmount, of the rewards accruing from the good we atchieve, and of the advantageous consequences by which it will be followed to ourselves and to others? If any one pretends, that every heroic action supposes this sort of intoxication; I will answer, that this transient ardor is, in obscure

scure situations of life, very different from that inspired by example, by the camp, by a battle, by that shame attached to the least mark of fear, by the noble enthusiasm of an elevated mind, which, with a full knowledge of causes and effects, conceives and executes an heroic action, being carried to it only by the beauty of the action itself, and by a sentiment of its own honour and worth.

What I am going to relate, cannot properly be called an heroic action: it is, however, a trait, which, applied to great personages, would make no contemptible figure either in epic, or dramatic composition. Proud mortals, who are placed above the rest of mankind, will see,

that there are, in the obscurer classes of the people, great men lost to society, for want only of those opportunities of distinguishing themselves, which a conspicuous rank affords. Although persons of high station scarcely deign to look upon them but with contempt, my story will convince them, that men of this order sometimes possess souls more worthy of the favours of fortune, than those whom the blind goddess has the most distinguished. The virtue of the great, is often no more than pomp and ostentation : among the people it shines in all its purity ; it animates their simple hearts, which know no need of appearing what they are not in the eyes of their fellow-creatures.

All

All are equal in the state of nature, as they were also in the origin of nations, and during the whole period that industry, arts, commerce, and ambition led not to inequality of conditions. In proportion as these grew more subject to political regulations, the people became less known, and indeed condemned to a certain degree of contempt and obscurity. Bodily strength, the first title to distinction and superiority, the first kind of merit and heroism, was now no longer held in estimation. The athletic games, the combats at feasts and religious ceremonies, the different national gymnastic exercises, have lost all their dignity and importance. By their means were
estimated

estimated the valour, the courage, the address of each citizen; by them were nourished and sustained that military ardor, that confidence in their own strength, which nations have found so useful for the defence of their country, the preservation of their liberties, and the maintenance of their glory.

At the time when the little country of Greece retained her superiority over the immense kingdoms of Asia; when a handful of Spartans stopped the torrent of a prodigious army; when many small states flourished in the Peloponnese, who had always their armies at hand, leagued together, supporting themselves firmly against the enterprising ambition, avarice, and cunning,

ning, of neighbouring monarchs,—the man of the people appeared in the public games, and there displaying his strength and address in carrying off the prizes, obtained the applauses of his fellow citizens, the rewards of his illustrious chiefs, and the gift of immortal fame.

Nations became more polished; that is to say, more corrupted: artists succeeded to athletics: effeminate pleasures, to the boast of strength: ornaments and elegance, to solidity and energy: ingenious disputes, to combats: in short, all the soft vices of luxury, to the austere virtues of patriotism. The conquerors had then a fine game to play: they invaded those once-impenetrable countries; they reduced

to

to slavery those Greeks formerly so untameable, and deprived them of their precious liberty, the preservation of which had always been the first consideration of their ancestors; they eased them, at length, of the care of governing themselves, confounding them amongst a croud of subject provinces, destined to serve the rapaciousness of governors and the violence of tyrants.

Scarce had a glimmer of liberty again retrieved some part of the earth, when the lower class of people, who constitute the greater part of society, and who feel more sensibly the advantages of it, renewed those primitive manners inspired by nature; and began to exercise their natural strength, in tilting-matches, games,

games, and combats, and to look upon any victory over their equals as the highest point of glory. This natural sentiment, restrained and directed by the heads of the people, gave rise to those popular spectacles so proper to foster and encourage it. The little republics of Florence, Sienna, Pisa, and Bologna, used to exhibit them frequently, and indeed periodically, upon certain feast days, as those of *Notre Dame*, of the tutelary saints of their cities; and also upon occasions of any great political event; and sometimes to celebrate the *Baccanales d'hiver*. It is not long since even the battles upon the bridge of the Arno have been suppressed; but our age is too much refined not to discourage such barbarous exercises.

cises, which flourished in times ill provided with politer amusements, when men were inured to hardships, and disposed to take up arms upon every occasion, and to embrace either the quarrels of an interior faction, or the cause of the state against an open enemy.

Some small remains of these ancient customs of Italy may still be seen at Venice. This city is justly celebrated for the glorious records of its history, for a date more ancient than any other actual republic, for the singularity of its situation and construction, as well as for many other distinguishing circumstances. There is something in the manners of the inhabitants, which may recal to the remembrance of

an observer their warlike and romantic origin, their heroic progress, their relation to Greece, and the spirit of those ancient times which saw them flourish. Above all, that numerous and singular body of gondoliers lead to these reflections, and give occasion to other interesting retrospects. It is well known that the gondola is a little boat, upon a peculiar construction, and adapted solely to the navigation of the Venetian canals, which form the ground-plot, in the middle of which is built this grand and magnificent city, and which encompass it at several miles distance from the *terra firma*. These gondolas are the public and private carriages; they are made use of in the same manner as hackney-

hackney-coaches, &c. in other great capitals : they are diversified too in regard to their forms ; and, as appropriated to various uses, they often change their names and aspects : but the generical name of gondoliers includes all kind of men that handle the oar in the city of Venice. This very considerable body of men have enjoyed, for many ages, the most advantageous repute. They are famed for their robust shape, and much noted for their address, their good-humour, their wit in ingenious and lively repartees, and, above all, for their discretion, their attachment to their masters, and their devotion to the patricians, the rulers of the state.

It is my opinion, that their employment,

ployment, by keeping them in continual exercise, and requiring a general motion of the body, makes them robust and healthy, and that from hence proceeds their good-humour, vivacity, and every other happy disposition.

I even think, that their attachment, their fidelity towards their masters, and their very zealous devotion towards the chiefs of their country, are not wholly owing to the good treatment which they receive from one or the other, although the Venetians are the most mildly governed, and perhaps the least oppressed, of any nation whatever; and a gondolier is a servant better paid than any other, and a labourer whose work procures him

a more comfortable livelihood : but I am inclined to imagine, that these sentiments are natural to a Venetian gondolier ; who, in that capacity, knows no element but his canals, has no other resource than his oar and his bark, no other means of subsistence should he cease to be a gondolier ; a change which, however, seems as impossible to him as that of his nature.

The ancient spirit of Grecian emulation reigns still among these brave people. When the weather permits, they amuse themselves, in their leisure hours, with rowing over their canals, and the vast lagoons which surround their city, perched upon the end of their barks, and challenging one another

to the race. They put up little prizes (often no more than a piece of cloth in the form of a flag, a green branch, &c.) and display the greatest ardor to obtain them. No sooner do the people on the quays, or those belonging to the other boats that are wandering about, perceive a challenge, than they immediately follow the combatants: people gather together on the shore, the windows are crowded, different sides are espoused, and the incident becomes, almost insensibly, a very animated holiday. If, perchance, the lord of some sumptuous palace, or a curious stranger at the balcony of his hotel, shew the least desire to see the contest, arrangements are soon made for a more orderly course

with all the joy imaginable. Then the sound of the drums, blended with that of the timbrels and songs of the women, is heard in the boats: judges are named, seconds appointed; and, in short, almost all the interesting circumstances of the public games of ancient times are in a moment recalled, without the least previous expectation.

But the spectacle, which has the power of exciting the greatest emotions of the heart, admiration, enthusiasm, a sense of glory, and the whole train of our best feelings, is the grand *regata*, commanded and directed by principal persons, in the name of the government. This is only exhibited on particular occasions, as the visits of foreign princes
and

and kings at Venice; since they have learned, after the example of the first sovereign in Europe, to travel like other mortals, and love to see objects at their source.

It is difficult to give a just idea of the ardor that the notice of a *regata* spreads among all classes of the inhabitants of Venice. Proud of the exclusive privilege of giving such a spectacle, through the wonderful local circumstances of their city, they are highly delighted with making preparations a long time before, in order to contribute all they can towards the perfection and enjoyment of the spectacle. A thousand interests are formed and augmented every day; parties in favor of the different competitors

who are known ; the protection of young noblemen given to the gondoliers in their service ; the desire of honours and rewards in the aspirants ; and, in the midst of all this, that ingenious national industry, which awakes the Venetians from their habitual indolence, to derive advantage from the business and agitation of the moment ; all these circumstances united, give to the numerous inhabitants of this lively city a degree of spirit and animation, which render it, during that time, a delightful abode in the eyes of the philosopher and the stranger. Crowds of people flock from the adjacent parts, and travellers joyfully repair to this scene of gaiety and pleasure.

Although

Although it is allowable for any man to go and inscribe his name in the list of combatants, until the fixed number is complete, it will not be amiss to remark one thing, which has relation to more ancient times. The state of a gondolier is of much consideration among the people; which is very natural, that having been the primitive condition of the inhabitants of this country. But, besides this general consideration, there are among them some families truly distinguished and respected by their equals, whose antiquity is acknowledged, and who, on account of a succession of virtuous men, able in their profession, and honoured for the prizes they have carried off in these contests, form

the body of noble gondoliers ; often more worthy of that title than the higher order of nobility, who only derive their honours from the merit of their ancestors, or from their own riches. The consideration for those families is carried so far, that, in the disputes frequently arising among the gondoliers in their ordinary passage of the canals, we sometimes see a quarrel instantly made up by the simple interposition of a third person, who has chanced to be of this revered body. They are rigid with respect to mis-alliances in their families, and they endeavour reciprocally to give and take their wives among those of their own rank. But we must remark here, with pleasure, that these distinctions in-

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fer no inequality of condition, nor admit any oppression of inferiors, being founded solely on laudable and virtuous opinions. Distinctions derived from fortune only, are those which always outrage nature, and often virtue.

In general, the competitors at the great *regatas* are chosen from among these families of reputation. As soon as they are fixed upon for this exploit, they spend the intermediate time in preparing themselves for it, by a daily assiduous and fatiguing exercise. If they are in service, their masters, during that time, not only give them their liberty, but also augment their wages. I do not know whether this custom would not seem to indicate, that
they

they look upon them as persons consecrated to the honour of the nation, and under a sort of obligation to contribute to its glory.

At last, the great day arrives. Their relations assemble together; they encourage the heroes, by calling to their minds the records of their families: the women present the oar, beseeching them, in an epic tone, to remember, that they are the sons of famous men, whose steps they will be expected to follow: this they do with as much solemnity as the Spartan women presented the shield to their sons, bidding them either return with, or upon it. Religion, as practised among the lower class of people, has its share in the preparations for
this

this enterprize. They cause masses to be said; they make vows to some particular church, and they arm their boats for the contest with the images of those saints who are most in vogue. Sorcerers are not forgotten upon this occasion: I myself have heard a gondolier, who had lost the race, declare, that witchcraft had been practised against him, or certainly he must have won the day. I applauded this supposition, because it prevented the poor fellow from thinking ill of himself; an opinion that might be favorable to him another time.

The course is about four miles: the boats start from a certain place, run thro' the great winding canal, which

which divides the town into two parts, turn round a picket, and, coming back the same way, go and seize the prize, which is fixed at the acutest angle of the great canal, on the convex side; so that the point of sight may be the more extended, and the prize seized in the sight of the spectators on both sides.

According to the number of competitors, different races are performed in different sorts of boats, some with one oar, and others with two. The prizes proposed are four, indicated by four flags of different colours, with the different value of the prizes marked upon them. These flags, public and glorious monuments, are the prizes to which the competitors particularly aspire.

But

But the government always adds to each a genteel sum of money ; besides that the conquerors, immediately after the victory, are surrounded by all the *beau monde*, who congratulate and make them presents : after which they go, bearing their honourable trophy in their hand, down the whole length of the canal, and receive the applause of innumerable spectators.

This grand canal, ever striking by the singularity and beauty of the buildings which border it, is, upon these occasions, covered with an infinity of spectators, in all sorts of barges, boats, and gondolas. The element, on which they move, is scarcely-seen : but the noise of oars, the agitation of arms and bodies

in perpetual motion, indicate the spectacle to be upon the water. At certain distances, on each side of the shore, are erected little amphitheatres and scaffoldings, where are placed bands of music; the harmonious sound of which predominates, now and then, over the buzzing noise of the people. Some days before a *regata* one may see, on the great canal, many boats for pleasure and entertainment. The young noble, the citizen, the rich artisan, mounts a long boat of six or eight oars; his gondoliers decorated with rich and singular dresses, and the vessel itself adorned with various stuffs. Among the nobles there are always a number who are at a considerable expence in these decorations,

tions, and, at the *regata* itself, exhibit, on the water, personages of mythologic story, with the heroes of antiquity in their train, or amuse themselves with representing the *costumi* of different nations: in short, people contribute, with a mad sort of magnificence, from all quarters, to this masquerade, the favorite diversion of the Venetians. But these great machines, not being the less in motion on account of their ornaments, are not merely destined to grace the shew: they are employed at the *regata*, at every moment, to range the people, to protect the course, and to keep the avenue open and clear to the goal. The nobility, kneeling upon cushions at the prow of their vessels, are
attentive

attentive to these matters, and announce their orders to the most resolute, by darting at them little gilded, or silvered balls, by means of certain bows, with which they are furnished on this occasion. And this is the only appearance of coercion in the Venetian police on these days of the greatest tumult: nor is there to be seen, in any part of the city, a body of guards, or patrol, nor even a gun nor a halbert. The mildness of the nation, its gaiety, its education in the habit of believing that the government is ever awake, that it knows and sees every thing; its respectful attachment to the body of patricians; the sole aspect of certain officers of the police in their robes, dispersed in different places;

places; at once operate and explain that tranquillity, that security, which we see in the midst of the greatest confusion, and that surprising docility in so lively and fiery a people.

These are the most remarkable customs and circumstances of the celebrated Venetian *regata*. I have all the ideas fresh in my mind; for two were given in this very spring of the year 1784: the first, to the king of Sweden, among other entertainments, by which the republic testified to that illustrious sovereign, the satisfaction they felt in the honour he did them: the second, to their royal highnesses the archduke Ferdinand of Austria and his consort, on the occasion of a

visit which these neighbouring princes made to the city of Venice.

After having thus prepared my scene, and made known my personages, I will now relate a plebeian tale, the subject of which really happened at this second *regata*. My reader will not be displeased to learn, at the same time, several other customs of a nation, which still preserves many interesting characteristics that distinguish it from the other people of Italy.

Nane Deo, a young gondolier, aged about twenty-two, of a most advantageous figure and agreeable countenance, very able in his profession, inured to fatigue, full of honour

honour and sentiment, was in love with a young girl of his own station in life; an orphan, who had lived from her infancy with her mother, a brother and his wife. This brother, called *Momolo Vendetta*, is descended from one of the most distinguished families among this class of people. His ancestors are celebrated for the number of glorious prizes they have gained at the great *regatas*; and the humble roof of his house is decorated with the flags carried off by their victorious hands. *Momolo* also, to shew himself worthy of being the heir, and to imitate the valour of his father, had added three to the family acquisitions. A good father, a good husband, an excellent servant, he was the confi-

dant and friend of his matter, and an honour to the race of faithful gondoliers.

A little trait of resemblance to ancient Greece is found in a custom among the Venetian people, and especially among the gondoliers, of singing *Tasso* and *Ariosto*. The Greeks knew *Homer* by heart, and the rhapsodists ran about the Grecian cities declaiming his poems. In the same manner the Venetian gondolier, seated at the poop of his boat, or gently pushing along his bark, makes the palace-walls resound with his manly and sonorous voice, whilst he sings the beautiful octaves of the Italian Homer. The Venetians have an ancient musical rhythm for that purpose, which expresses all the fine cadences

cadences of these majestic and harmonious verses.

Momolo possessed this talent in a superior degree ; and, as every gondolier is ambitious of some advantage on which to challenge his brethren, he would provoke the ablest among them to give proof of the best voice and the happiest memory. He knew, by heart, all the *Jerusalem Delivered*, a great part of *Rolando*, some chapters of the *Reaux de France*, several scenes of *Goldoni*, without mentioning a number of histories in the stile of romances, and many miracles, which the Venetian people learn by heart, and declaim, or sing with their families. Loved and esteemed by his neighbours and his comrades, *Momolo*

has often been created a judge in the disputes which happen among the gondoliers; and they would sooner be determined by his judgment, than that of a higher tribunal. His house was generally the place of reconciliation, the temple of peace. A glass of wine at his house often put an end to all rivalry and dispute; but wine was never given in his dwelling but as a sign of peace. It is an inviolable seal, which the Venetian people set to all acts of peace and reconciliation. When it is known that two enemies have finished an *eclaircissement* by drinking together, one may be certain that all is quiet.

It was at one of these reconciliations between two rivals, that the
young

young *Deo* first saw the beautiful *Bettina*. It was his duty to be of the party, in quality of sponfor, or sworn brother. It is still a custom with these people to form, one amongst another, in consequence of some strict friendship, or some relation as to age, or service, a sacred tie, which consists, according to their expression, in being *sworn brothers*. From that moment they make a common cause in all affairs of honour or pleasure: one embraces all the quarrels of the other, and would sacrifice his life in his defence for what would be esteemed sufficient cause. This custom is derived from the ancient *Freres d'Armes* in the times of chivalry.

Bettina had that day the office of

M 4 helping

helping round the wine. A napkin, as white as snow, hung upon her arm, not less white. She approached *Nane*, and presented him the cup of peace. He could not, without emotion, behold the prettiest figure, the most lively and modest countenance, the graces of her smile, the fire of her large black eyes, the beauty of her hair, the freshness and brilliancy of her complexion, and all the charms diffused about her person. The young *Deo* looked upon her with an air of surprise and affection: his imagination took fire, which communicated itself to his heart as every moment he observed her, whether near, or at a distance. He would often feign some pretext or other to stop her

as she passed near him on this occasion: she blushed, and hung down her head: he scarcely knew how to contain himself, yet dared not to come to an explicit declaration of his passion. With the glass in his hand, he had recourse to his *Tasso*, and gallantly sung an octave; the application of which was understood by *Bettina*: she answered in singing the verse which followed. This put the company in train: each in his turn sung a stanza, until the impatient youths joined all at once in chorus, and thus joyfully ended the feast of friendship.

Deo alone, at parting, found himself melancholy and thoughtful: the flame, which he felt lighted up in his heart, deprived him of repose;

pose; and from that time he was continually meditating means, by which he might again see his fair *Bettina*, whose first reception had not discouraged him. But how put them into execution? The Venetian girls, who are educated in good moral principles, are shut up in their houses, always occupied at their work; having at the most no greater liberty than to run now and then for an instant to their windows. They never go out but to hear mass upon holidays, preceding their mothers, or some old relation.

A custom of so much constraint, so austere a system, with regard to daughters and young girls, in the greatest part of Italy, at first sight appears to be very wrong, and
is

is generally much condemned by strangers. One cannot deny, that it is attended with inconveniences ; but the pretended remedy, of educating young women in a convent, has many more. Every thing well considered, I am sincerely of opinion, that the opposite system, practised in other countries, on the west and north of Italy, to the great satisfaction of the inhabitants and of strangers, would here have consequences still more prejudicial to society, than such as may arise from that severe restraint, under which the Italian parents keep their children. Till a young woman is committed to the care of a husband, it would generally be dangerous, among these fiery people, to shew
too

too easily those objects, which are of themselves of very combustible matter. It must be allowed, that manners in Italy are much more relaxed than in England, France, or Germany: and it is not to be wondered, if we consider its climate, or indeed its legislation. Marriage being here little respected, what should we not have to fear from enterprizes against young persons without defence, and perhaps without any great desire to defend themselves?

Our young lover never experienced a longer week, and never thought a Sunday, or a holiday so slow in coming. At the very first festival, he posted himself at the door of his parochial church, for
the

the purpose of catching a sight of his fair mistress as she came thither. At last she appeared, with her mother. *Deo* went before, entered the church, and, with a trembling hand, offered holy water to the mother and daughter, with a respect mixed with tenderness and devotion. The daughter blushed as usual, and fixed her eyes on the ground; the mother honestly thanked him: and the lover kept behind them, at some distance, all the time of the mass; and then quitted the church first. He did not fail to pass and repass every day under *Bettina's* window, praying for a glance, which he obtained very seldom, and then by stealth. Now and then he contrived, with his musical comrades,

to take his evening walks about the environs, where he excited them to sing, whilst his own voice predominated over all the rest. He observed, on these occasions, with the greatest delight, some trifling innuendoes; but they were of infinite value to a lover, and flattered him that his passion was approved and even returned. He knew not, however, by what means to assure himself of this important point, nor how to advance his interests with the idol of his heart. He could not find any pretext whatever to go to *Momolo's* house: and, provided he could have done it, he very much feared, that when his intention was known, it might be the means of troubling the sweet domestic

mestic repose, that his dear *Bettina* enjoyed in the bosom of her brother's family. Luckily, the feast of the tutelary saint of the parish was near, and *Nane* foresaw, that day might produce something favourable to his wishes.

On this anniversary, the young girls of the parish are permitted in the afternoon to go out, and assemble in certain places to dance together. Here we see one with a *tambour de basque* in her hand, accompanying her voice, and regulating the dance; there another with the castanets at her fingers, turning round the finger, and every now and then running about the place in the middle of the dancers. Before the house of the most considerable

siderable parishioner, which is decorated with festoons, and tinsel ornaments, a table is spread, and served with wine and fruits, where the good parents of the families drink round to each other's health, and to that of their masters, applauding the mirth of their children, and relating their former exploits. The mothers, aunts, and old grandmothers, dispersed about in groups, keep a watch upon the young persons, as much as their own chat and amusement will allow. Each boasts the merit of her daughter, or niece; deploras the badness of the times, which are so changed; talks scandal of those who are absent; and commends the curate's sermon. Persons passing by,

by, and particularly those of the same parish, are allowed to stop, to throw out a *bon mot*, or some aukward compliment to the fair dancers; but it is very rare, that any one of them is ever invited to take part in the diversion. Sometimes this favor is however granted to some young fellow who is distinguished for dancing the *furlana*, and can keep it up a long time. This is a charming national dance for two persons, regularly figured, and confined to a certain air, which is always the same. Besides the merit of dancing it with grace and agility, the boast of the man consists in beginning it again many times, one after another, without repose, and with different girls,

supporting, as well as he can, the exercise which each partner in her turn affords him.

Those girls, who are promised in marriage, or who have avowed lovers approved of by their friends, adorn their hair, upon holidays, with some agreeable flower, the present of their future husbands; and it is understood, by that sign, that their hearts are no longer at liberty.—*Deo* would have given half his life to have presented a garland to his fair one. The evening before the holiday, he placed himself again at his old station, the church door, with a rose in his hand; and the moment that *Bettina* entered to assist at vespers, he wished to present it to her; but his arm, half-

stretched out, was withheld, partly by that timidity which passionate love inspires, and partly by respect to the presence of her mother, who, according to the Venetian custom, followed her daughter. In the afternoon of the following great day, he was one of the first upon the place before *Momolo's* house. He saw the joyful assembly gathering together by degrees, without once taking his eyes from the door, or windows of his mistress's abode. At last she appeared. A rose-coloured corset, a short white petticoat, rose-coloured slippers, and a muslin neck-handkerchief, formed, trinkets excepted, all *Bettina's* dress. Her fine black hair was twisted, and gathered round

N 2 behind

behind her head, and fastened by a large gold pin. Some little curls, falling from the fore hair, shadowed her forehead, and set off the whiteness of her complexion: larger ones fell negligently down her cheeks, which were animated by the most lively carnation. Bracelets of a small gold twist, or sort of chain-work, about her hands, with the same ornament about her neck in several rounds, from which hung a gold medal—were all her jewels, and these every woman and girl among the Venetian people generally possess, and look upon as a very necessary part of their attire. This is a relic of ancient luxury, at the time this city, the depositary of all the commerce of Asia, and the

the money of Europe, swam in opulence.

But what was the situation of the love-sick *Nane*, whilst running over the charms of his mistress, he perceived in her hair a rose, like that which he meant to have offered her the preceding day! He trembled, turned pale; he dared no longer fix his eyes upon her. Without doubt, some more happy rival had engaged her heart.—It must be so.—*Momolo*, who was sitting at a table with his mother, and his wife, quietly eating a fallad, a dish of fresh pilchards, some ham, and a plate of cherries, surrounded with cheese, having observed *Nane* dejected, absent, and motionless, called him from amongst the middle of the

crowd: "Come, my friend, drink
" a sup with us, and partake of
" our repast." *Mencio* never sees
his friends without making them
partake of what he thinks may give
them pleasure. *Deo*, recovering
himself, accepted the invitation;
but a cruel jealousy gnawed his
heart, and clouded his countenance,
generally so gay and open. Wholly
taken up with his object, he could
not refrain from extolling the ardor
and activity of his friend's young
sister, who had been dancing a long
while without stopping, and had
already tired several of her partners.
"Oh! as to that qualification,"
says *Momolo*, "my sister has not
" her equal: dancing is her pre-
" dominant passion; and I am hap-
" py

“ py to see the poor girl amused ;
 “ particularly, as she can enjoy this
 “ pleasure very rarely ; only upon
 “ this day, and two or three times
 “ in the carnival, throughout the
 “ whole year. — But what is the
 “ meaning of that flower, which
 “ *Bettina* wears upon her head ?”

The good mother fell a laughing,
 and said : “ Don’t be alarmed, my
 “ son ; it is an artificial flower.
 “ Your sister will never have any
 “ other lover, but him, who is to
 “ be her husband. I was this morn-
 “ ing almost in despair of finding
 “ her an artificial rose, with which
 “ she might dress herself without
 “ giving handle to slander : luck-
 “ ily I met with one at her god-
 “ mother’s, who lent it me.” At

these words the heart of our young lover beat with pleasure: the delicate attention of his mistress overwhelmed him with joy: after this he could no more keep his eyes from her. These trifles in love, are events in our lives which excite more interesting sensations, than the most important and serious affairs. *Bettina* in her turn, having perhaps guessed, from her lover's countenance, at his alarm, and the eclairsissement which had followed it, looked at him now and then in the tenderest manner; but she dared not approach the table. At last her brother called her, and made her drink a glass of wine and water, desiring her to repose a little, by taking the tambour. She took it,
and

and played with great grace, and sung so agreeably a few couplets, modestly gallant, that *Nan* was quite in rapture. He now soon perceived, with as much grief as surprize, that the day was drawing to its close, and the company beginning to separate: he, too, was obliged to take his leave. He awkwardly thanked his friend; cast a tender look at his mistress, passing as close to her as he possibly could; received a glance and a sigh from her, and ran away.

He felt that his situation was no longer supportable. “ *Bettina* has no engagement; *Bettina* surely will consent to make me happy: her eyes, her attentions, have told me as much: I burn, I am consumed with anxiety:

anxiety: I will continue no longer in this hell; I will go this instant and seek my godfather, he will make my request: to-morrow, even to-morrow, I will ask *Bettina* of her brother."—A lover of this temper seldom finds much rest, and less than ever after such a resolution. Very early in the morning he rose, and went to *Mark Toscan*, his godfather, an old gondolier, respectable for the merit of his younger days: he enjoyed his salary out of service, a family he had served, during forty years, contributing generously to his subsistence. This is constantly the custom of the Venetian nobles, to support the invalid gondoliers who have grown old in their service. *Mark*, having heard the proposition
of

of his godson, approved it, and did not refuse to employ his good offices. He acknowledged that the parties were well matched: he knew the reputation of *Momolo*, and of his family, and doubted not the merit of the young woman, brought up under such relations. Besides, considerations of interest never cause obstacles among these people. A strong pair of arms, and prudent conduct, will always insure the husband such a place, as will support his family, assisted by the labour and care of an honest and good wife.—“But, my son,” said *Mark*, “it is yet too early: *Momolo* is still at council with his master: till he returns, let us go together to church and hear mass.” They accordingly went

went to *Noftra Dama della Salute*, and *Nane* gave alms to the priest, that he might apply the mafs to his purpose. These are refinements of popular devotion, which paffion infpires. The piety with which the young man affifted at the fervice was compofed of love, fear, and defire; all which had an equal fhare in his devotion. I fhould not have wondered, if, after leaving the church, he had had recourfe to a forcerefs.

They made their way, however, towards *Momolo's* houfe. "I commend thee, my fon," faid *Mark*, as they were walking along, "for having addreffed thy prayers to the holy virgin. Formerly this temple was always full of people: the Venetians

netians then paid a singular devotion to their patroness. Ah, my son! manners are much changed at present; they would not then have failed hearing mass every day: now they are contented if they do not frequently miss the councils and sittings of the magistrates. They pass their nights at casinos, in gaming and in pleasures. Our wages are augmented, it is true; and, when I was young, I knew nothing of the extraordinary presents which are now given you, when you are kept waiting with your gondolas till past midnight: but, on the other hand, the reputation we had with our masters cost them some complaisance; from which we drew more advantage at once, than you do, at present, in
many

many months. We were merry and contented : the great canal refounded every night with our songs and ferenades. *Tasso* was in the mouth of all my comrades : they taught his poems to the young gondoliers, who got them by heart. Upon certain days, the most expert amongst us assembled the others together, read to them, and explained the most difficult passages. There were then a much greater number who could read and write than at present : I have known some, who have even composed songs, which our masters have not disdained to read. Their confidence, familiarity, and goodness towards us, gave us importance in our own eyes : we were better subjects, and better servants.

vants. The liberty of modern manners has lessened the necessity they had of our services, and our condition has lost much of its consequence: you young people have no idea of all this.

There happened once an election for the office of major: I then served Madam *Belegno*. I myself presented, to the procurator *Calergi*, an old Dalmatian officer, a man of merit, but who had no protector. My mistress, said I, recommends him to your excellency.—It was sufficient: the procurator took the interests of this worthy man to heart; he obtained the place, and did honour to her recommendation and to mine. How much our ladies have been to blame to lose their ancient reserve!

reserve! Their power is destroyed: they have no longer any influence in affairs; and what they have gained on the side of amusement, they have lost in their influence with the chiefs of the republic.

Whilst the good old man was regretting the times past, he arrived at the door of *Momolo's* house, with his godson, who had been silent all the while. He had preserved the attentive countenance of a listener, although his mind was occupied with other ideas. *Momolo* was himself at the threshold, and, seeing his old friend *Mark*, exclaimed, "What good luck has brought you to me, and what do you in the company of that young man?"—"This, my dear friend, is my godson: I have something

something to say to you; let us go in, and beg the women to retire a little." They all three went in. *Momolo's* house consisted of a pretty large hall, two bed-chambers, and a kitchen, all on the ground-floor, and most delightfully clean and neat. They went forwards into the kitchen. *Nane* trembled from head to-foot. *Momolo* perceived the embarrassment of the youth, and asked the old man in what he could be of service to him. "*Liberi sensi in libere parole* *," answered *Mark*. "You have, I am told, a charming daughter, of a proper age to be settled in the world: here is my godson, who asks her in marriage. He has no vices: he has never been

* Honest thoughts in open speech.

seen either at taverns, or gaming-houses. He earns fourteen ducats a month of his young master (with whom he is a favorite) without reckoning his dinners, his mid-nights, and many perquisites and presents. Behold his hands, adorned with jaspers and rings of gold: they are the marks and fruits of his œconomy. Look at his person; observe his arms, worthy of Sampson: with strength of body to challenge the Philistines, there is no fear of his ever wanting a place. I will answer for his character: I have known him from his infancy, been careful to inform myself of his deportment, and to examine his actions closely: I have never heard any ill reports of him. I think your sister
will

will be easily convinced of his merit, and may live very happy with him. He will promise to marry her in a twelvemonth; thus allowing himself sufficient time to establish such a household as shall become the wife of *Deo*, and the sister of *Vendetta*."

During this discourse, *Momolo* had cast his eyes often upon the young man, and had measured him several times from head to foot with a tolerably satisfied air. *Nane* had not missed a single movement, or change on the countenance of him, whose answer was to decide his fate: he dared to encourage some degree of hope; and he had great need of it, to support him under the cruel agitation he suffered. All of a sudden,

O 2 *Momolo,*

Momolo, rising from his chair, and taking old *Mark* by the hand, said to both of them, "Come along with me, my friends, and you shall have my answer." He led them to the vestibule of his house; then stopping, with a voice of dignity and complacency addressed them thus: "Look up, my friends, fix your attention upon the objects which surround you." This vestibule was ornamented with the portraits of his father and mother, and their forefathers, and generations before them, with the names of each person at the bottom, and the dates of such transactions as reflected honour on their characters. The painting, to say the truth, was not exquisite, but the characters were curious.

They

They were large heads, strongly coloured, and dressed in laced bonnets, after the mode of the gondoliers; some with pipes in their mouths, and others with the end of an oar sticking up on one side of them. In the spaces between the pictures, the walls were covered with flags, of all colours, half consumed by time, and ranged all round in the manner of trophies. "Behold," said he to them, "my forefathers; read their records, and mine also. Yes, *Nane* is a young man, whom I esteem and love: but it shall not be said, that the sister of *Vendetta* married a man, who had not served his prince, or brought off some honorable mark of victory. Such is the unalterable law of my

O 3 family,

family, and which my ancestors have constantly observed. We have never given, nor received, a woman in marriage, without joining her hands to hands made glorious by such exploits as do credit to the rank in which God has been pleased to place us." *Mark*, astonished, made no reply: *Nane* stood motionless and overwhelmed, as if a thunder-bolt had fallen upon him; when *Momolo*, assuming once more his heroic air, and laying one hand upon the young man's shoulder, said, with an animating tone of voice, "Courage, *Deo*: such is the affection that I bear my old friend, and the opinion I have of yourself, that I am going to propose a method which may satisfy us all;

all; and the only one which will convince you of my desire to render you happy, and to cherish your hopes. May Heaven, which suggested it to me, bless the thought, and hear the vows, which shall be common between us! Yes, my friend, the opportunity is favorable, the career of glory is open. In three days our patrons* are going to give a *regata* to the archduke of Austria. Enter thy name in the list of competitors. Go, contend, conquer, and *Bettina* shall be thine. But it is just, while giving you my advice, I should give you,

* An affectionate and flattering title, expressive of submission, which the gondoliers often use to the nobility, who are the sovereign body.

too, some proof of my zeal. Come, *Deo*, I offer to row with thee, to partake of thy fatigues and thy dangers. My intention never again to enter into competition, being now in my fortieth year——” *Nane*, understanding the generous proposal, half expressed, threw himself at *Momolo*’s feet, which he watered with his tears. *Mark*’s eyes moistened with sympathetic drops, he flung his arms about *Momolo*’s neck: then both, embracing the young man, raised him up, and went together into one of the other rooms; where *Momolo*, calling in the women, addressed his sister thus: “Here, my love, is a youth who comes to ask you in marriage: he has my good wishes, and I do not
reject

reject his demand. Though he be not yet worthy of you, I trust he will be in three days. Assure him (since I know your heart) you have no dislike to him; encourage him to do you honour, and recommend him to the holy virgin. I have proposed to row with him, to be his comrade and brother in the race, as he will soon become mine in a more solemn manner. It is upon the condition of his returning victorious from the *regata* that his happiness depends: thou knowest thou ought'st to aspire to a husband crowned with honour, and that no other must enter into our alliance." *Bettina's* eyes were fixed on the ground; her countenance was all on fire, her whole person in confusion.

fusion. Poor *Nane* began to stammer out a few words which could not be heard : he kissed *Vendetta's* hand with a silent transport, and cast an eager look upon the troubled maiden, deeply affected with her situation. The sister-in-law and *Mark* wept for joy, and both, approaching *Bettina*, consoled her upon the uncertainty of the event upon which her fate depended.

The children of the family, as soon as they heard the mention of a *regata*, and of a course, began to sing *evvivas* : the whole house was animated, the joy became general, the flame of honour burned in every heart. A glass of wine drunk all round, to the success of the enterprize, put an end to this interesting conference ;

rence ; and the three men agreed to go together to the masters of the combatants, to obtain their permission to row in the *regata*. *Mark Toscan* was the speaker. The circumstance of the compact between the two future brothers-in-law was expressed in high terms, as well as the noble proceeding of *Momolo Vendetta*. Their masters, delighted with the proposal, and warmed in turn by that interest which the heart of every Venetian takes in a *regata*, and all the circumstances relating to it, highly applauded their resolution, and, promising to pay all the necessary expences, encouraged them with many assurances of their protection. The two candidates went immediately to inscribe their
names

names as competitors in the race of the two-oared boats, and shewed themselves on that day, at the trial (a kind of rehearsal of the *regata*), in a manner that gave some apprehensions to their opponents. The third day was fixed for the grand contest, before the republic and their royal guests. *Momolo* permitted *Nane* to dine at his house every day. The happiness of seeing his beloved *Bettina*, could not fail to excite his utmost ambition, and to inspire him with invincible courage. The youth burned with the most ardent desire of entering the lists, and felt the utmost impatience for the day of combat, when he should receive the oar from the hands of his mistress.

Momolo,

Momolo, as an experienced hero, gave this advice to young *Deo*:
“As soon as thou hearest the signal, hasten to distance thy companions: but bear not with too much weight upon thy oar; the smallness of the boat will not admit too violent a pressure, and may endanger its oversetting. Gently slacken thy course, when thou seest the others behind thee, that thou mayest not exhaust thy strength. Thou wilt have occasion for it, when thou hast attained the middle of the course. Then exert it all to arrive first at the end. Observe me, and adopt, from my way of rowing, a sort of address, not less necessary than strength. When thou remarkest any boat endeavouring to
cross

cross thee, always keep where the canal is deepest. Indulge no abuse of thy rivals, either in words, or actions: victory is the only vengeance we are permitted to take." Thus schooled, *Momolo* made him often repeat the round which they had to run, pointing out every shallow in the canal, as well as those parts where the tide flows in with the greatest rapidity.

At last the great day arrives. The women interested in the fate of our champions, denied themselves all kinds of amusement, which this gay and noisy festival offered them on all sides. They did not even cast their eyes upon the great canal, already peopled by the crowd, and embellished by the great barges of
7
parade,

parade, with their trains. In trembling agitation they went to church at the break of day, and, prostrating themselves at the foot of the altar, implored the predilection of Heaven in their favor, with the same ardor, as if they were asking the salvation of their country, or victory over a public enemy. *Bettina*, the tender *Bettina*, repeated every prayer she knew by heart; she sighed, and looked with suppliant eyes, red and moistened with tears, upon the images of the saints, on every object and instrument of worship with which she was surrounded. She made vows for the success of her brother's instructions: her lips pronounced them, whilst her heart breathed much warmer wishes in behalf
of

of her lover. These she dared scarcely express in words, and found a sort of satisfaction in believing them confounded with the others.

The relations in common were now all assembled at *Vendetta's* house: a priest was among them, who came to celebrate a mass, particularly directed to the great object of the moment. Muffled up in his surplice, and followed by a boy, holding the holy water, he at length took the basin in his hands, and sprinkled both ends of the boat, afterwards fixing to it the image of *Nostra Dama della Salute*. *Momolo's* wife gave the oar to her husband, with the recollection of his past triumphs: *Bettina*, with a trembling hand, next presented one to her lover,

lover, and fell back into a chair, overcome by the agitation of her spirits: unable to speak, she cast upon him the most expressive look. What tenderness and eloquence, what prayers, what vows, did not that look convey! *Deo* exclaimed, "I go to contend for thee, and shall I not conquer?" Observing a white riband, which tied her flowing tresses, he requested it of her. She gave it. *Deo*, first kissing it, pressed it to his heart, and then tied it round his cap. The whole mansion now echoed with exclamations of joy, with the happy omens and wishes of the numerous relations. The good people of their party, being assembled in an open place near the house, followed the two

champions, dressed in their uniform, to the boat. They both leaped vigorously into it, and darted along the water to gain the place from whence they were to start. The intrepid air and determined confidence which their countenances manifested, inspired their rivals, whom they overtook on their way, with something like doubt and apprehension.

The women had not courage to behold a contest in which they were so nearly interested. They remained at home with some friends, too kind to leave them in their uneasy situation. The experienced valour of *Momolo*, the strength of *Nane*, were happy prognostics. But *Bettina* seems rivetted to the ground

upon her knees, her eyes lifted up to heaven, and her hands clasped. The report of the cannon, the signal for beginning the course, made her start and shiver: unable any longer to keep the attitude of prayer, behold her extended upon the ground, without strength, or utterance! She is lifted up and placed in a chair, whilst perfumes and vinegar are applied to her nostrils. She articulates a few broken words: the passion, which hitherto had lain concealed in her heart, can no longer bear its confinement: her lover, her *Nane*, and sometimes her brother, were the only words she was able clearly to pronounce.

In the mean time, our champions were among the foremost in the

course, and exerting themselves to get before three others, who were just even with them.

The striking beauty of the spectacle at that moment is beyond description. It is no longer simply a magnificent diversion; but a national, and very interesting affair. All the different classes of spectators are moved and agitated—the crowd of boats, ranged so thick on both sides as to have the appearance of being heaped one on another; those which follow the race in confusion, with the greatest eagerness—the ornamented barges, which rise above the rest, by the brilliancy of rich stuffs, feathers, and streamers, still more relieved by the sable ground of the gondolas—bands of music,

music, dispersed about in barges, upon the terraces and quays, interrupted by the shouts of applause and encouragement to the foremost, or by the hooting of the populace to those that were behind—the columned fronts and balconies of the palaces and houses, thronged with the most brilliant company—the waving of fans and hats, by which thousands of spectators indicate the lively interest they take on the occasion—all these objects and circumstances together form a whole, whose parts it would be impossible to unite elsewhere; the local situation of Venice being absolutely original and singular, and the animation and vivacity of its inhabitants truly extraordinary.

Deo's boat began already to gain ground on those of his competitors: as soon as he had got before the temple of *Nostra Dama della Salute*, Nane recollected the protection for which he had prayed: he renewed his prayers with the greatest fervor, and all at once threw his bonnet, with his mistress's riband, into the water, on that side next the church. The spirit of this action was a fit of the greatest devotion, carrying with it, like many of those fits, some degree of inconsistency and contradiction. He pretended to sacrifice to his patron-saint, his passion and his mistress; whilst by this offering he sought to obtain the saint's assistance but in order to recover his sacrifice. But how interesting are the
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the transports of a heart affected at once with love and devotion ! The populace, who followed *Deo* with their eyes, edified by such a trait, lifting up their voices and arms to heaven, clapped their hands. This trifling circumstance, so much *à propos*, added interest to the spectacle, and gave *Deo* fresh strength and spirits. He had now visibly left his competitors behind, and might almost have assured himself of possessing an invincible advantage, when, by an unlucky but adroit manœuvre of the second boat, which followed him close, at the instant of doubling the picket, in order to return, by keeping too much out, he lost time, and was crossed ; so that the second, in turn-

ing round, reached him, and, keeping as close as possible to the picket, gained ground, and became the first. This accident caused prodigious vociferation: he that got the advantage had his protectors and partizans; but the greatest number pitied *Deo*. He was sensible of his fault; but, animated by the cry and encouraging gestures of his colleague, he was not disconcerted. *Momolo* had made great efforts to avoid this misfortune: but though he did not succeed, as a prudent man, he saw this was not the time to grumble at, or chide his unexpert companion. No body foresaw then, that this very misfortune would be productive of the greatest glory to our young hero,

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in furnishing him with an opportunity of signalizing himself by a most generous action. In darting forwards towards the goal, which they now approached, each kept his station, and *Deo* was unable, by any exertion, to gain his former place. They were now on the point of leaping, each according to priority, out of his boat, on the stairs of the temple of glory, where the flags were planted, when, all of a sudden, the man in the first boat, through too much ardour to seize the prize, fell into the water. *Nane*, taking advantage of the accident, at one nervous push gained the shore, leaped upon the steps; and what did he? seized, with both hands at once, the first and second flag, pulled

pulled them down, entered again into his boat, and deposited them in it. He then approached his competitor, who was still struggling in the water, pulled him out, and, as soon as he had replaced him in his boat, he presented him with the first flag, and modestly retained the second for himself. According to the laws of the *regata*, he had every right to appropriate the first to himself: but *Nane* was too generous, humane, and disinterested, not to disdain the rigour of a privilege, which appeared to him unjust, although so highly to his advantage. This instance of heroic delicacy created an universal sensation, and affected many people even to tears. Indeed, I think it an action worthy
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of the best times of **Rome** and **Sparta**. With sonorous and consecrated names, and the varnish of antiquity to set it off, it would justly have figured among the brightest records of ancient virtue.

Neither the applause, nor the rewards, which the spectators near the spot showered upon our conquerors, could one instant detain them. *Nane*, the happiest of mortals, seconded by his colleague, after having hoisted the flag at the prow of the boat, turned about directly towards *Vendetta's* house, and, darting with infinite rapidity along the water, and through the crowd, followed by a numerous train of friends, he arrived there out of breath through fatigue and joy.

Shouts

Shouts and acclamations had already announced to *Bettina* the victory of her lover : he runs and throws himself at her feet, with the trophy in his hand. — Alas ! *Bettina* neither hears nor sees him : she had fainted away : the agitation caused by fear and suspense had weakened her so much, that she was unable to support the torrent of joy. *Momolo's* wife ran into his arms ; his mother, his children, all crowded round to caress him : he embraced them one after another. “ *Nane* is victorious,” he cried ; “ *Nane* is the husband of my sister, and my brother.” He turned his eyes, and saw him at the feet of *Bettina*, in the attitude of despair : she yet shewed no sign of life. The
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little piazza, and the neighbouring streets, were filled with people, drawn together by *Deo's* fame. The noise of drums and trumpets stunned the house and that quarter of the city. "*Bettina*, my dear sister," cried *Momolo*, "behold thy husband in despair: embrace him, wipe the sweat off his forehead; thy brother allows, he commands thee to do it." A little recovered, by degrees she opened her eyes, and looked round her, not knowing yet whether her friends consoled or congratulated her. *Deo* was eager to receive the first look: she perceived it, and fixed her eyes tenderly upon him. No longer able to contain himself, he stifled her with his kisses. She tried in vain to defend herself,

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but wanted strength to resist. At length, withdrawn from her lover's caresses, she looked at her brother, quite ashamed of her weakness. *Momolo* had so confidently expected *Deo's* success, that, unknown to the lovers, he had obtained a licence to marry them that very evening. "Come, my children," said he, "repress no longer your mutual tenderness. *Deo*, receive thy wife from my hands, on the day of thy glory : enjoy the reward which thou hast so worthily merited. Live under my roof till we procure a more ample house, so that our two families may be one. Deposit thy trophy near those of my ancestors, who will shortly be thine also : and give to our patrons new subjects from our blood,

blood, who, emulous of our glory, may always serve them with fidelity, and preserve the honour of the *regata* in the republic, and in our own families.”

Nane, at the height of his happiness, pressed his wife and his brother together in his arms. They begged him to retire into another room, to take a moment's repose, and the refreshment of changing his dress. He went, and, in an instant, with a very sharp-pointed needle, traced the initials of his mistress's name, and above them the figure of a heart, on his right arm. Whilst the blood was spinning out, he rubbed the punctures with some kind of black powder, which insinuated itself into them in
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such a manner, that the characters can never be effaced. This is an ancient custom among the common people of Venice, by which they fix a lasting remembrance of particular events, whether they relate to gallantry, or to devotion: and it must be an idea inspired by nature into the breasts of impassioned men; for we find it practised among many savage nations of the islands and continent of America, who have never had the least intercourse with the Venetians. The former, from the custom of going naked, have ornamented their whole bodies in the same manner; but the operation is owing to the same motive in the inhabitants of both hemispheres.

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THE story I have related is a pleasing proof, that among the confined and ignorant populace, who are neither excited by ambition, nor instructed by great examples, we may, however, meet with noble, virtuous, and delicate actions. I have, with pleasure, seized the opportunity of this little occurrence, to give an idea of some Venetian customs, of the general manners of this people, and particularly of those of the gondoliers, a class of men, who, being by their condition peculiarly attached to their country, preserve a certain national spirit and character which ever interest our curiosity. Other ranks of society, in consequence of more general communication with each other,

acquire an indistinct resemblance. They insensibly substitute manners, language, and ideas of general convention, in the room of their own characteristics. It is by this universal masque, that those interesting traits of great and singular characters are often concealed and lost, in certain minds, formed by nature for great and noble exertions. I make little doubt, that, among the sequestered and almost inaccessible mountains of Savoy and Switzerland, many more instances of unaffected virtue and true heroism might be discovered, than in the midst of the most flourishing capitals, respect being had to the different number of individuals in these different positions of human society.

This reflection brings me to my favorite idea of the history of *subaltern heroes*, which I could wish for leisure to extend. Having ever been delighted with discovering great qualities in little people, I should, with pleasure, furnish observations of this sort, for the credit of human nature; which, amidst all the corruptions of the world, has need of every kind of assistance to maintain its dignity and honour.

F I N I S.